DAWN COMBS

Foreword by
JOEL SALATIN

HEAL LOCAL

20 Essential Herbs for Do-it-Yourself HOME HEALTHCARE

Praise for

HEAL *LOCAL*

[Dawn Combs'] compelling case for re-informing ourselves with ancient healing arts re-connects us to the sheer abundance and provision of our ecological nest. This book will walk you through the process, from initial interest to a home apothecary. Rather than a sanctimonious attitude, Dawn exhibits an appreciative can-do spirit that uplifts individual initiative and respects the awesomeness of natural healing. I hope this book awakens in you a thirst and hunger for medicinal plants in a *Heal Local* context.

— Joel Salatin, from the Foreword

This is the herb book that I've wanted forever! Dawn Combs gives us the information we need in order to take control of our health challenges. You'll learn to make tinctures and poultices and more, and you'll discover which herbs to use for what ailment; this is an essential book for every self-reliant homestead. No doubt the pages will become smudged and tattered from frequent use in the coming years.

— Deborah Niemann, author of *Homegrown and Handmade*, *Ecothrifty,* and *Raising Goats Naturally*

Increasingly, herbalism is becoming an important local source of health maintenance: in the home, on the farm, and in the community. Herbalist Dawn Combs teaches the reader how to confidently move into this increasingly prevalent and important field. *Heal Local* teaches a wide range of skills, from the backyard herb garden to twenty basic, safe, widely used herbs, to specific conditions which can be treated at home. This is an excellent introductory book but it will continue to provide insights over the decades. The excellent footnoting makes it a useful book for further research about herbalism and a diversity of related homestead skills.

— Matthew Wood MS (Herbal Medicine), Registered Herbalist (AHG)

An excellent reflection on integrating the western medicine model and local medicine communities, empowering the reader to take ownership of their

health and collaborate with their physician, incorporating medicines that may be as local as their own backyard.

— Cheri Dinsmore, R.N., B.S.N, President, Harmony Farm

Humans have always used the plants growing around them for healing. As Combs wisely points out, the simple act of gathering and using a common weed as a home remedy has profound and far-reaching effects, from enhancing our own self-reliance to making our world a better place for all. And I do mean all — from all sorts of people to the plants and other species that also depend upon them. Truly, this book is a practical and accessible doorway to the amazing and delicious world of herbal medicine. Yes, let's add wellness and healing to the rising tide of re-localization!

— Betzy Bancroft, RH(AHG), co-director, Vermont Center for Integrative Herbalism and advisory board member, United Plant Savers

May this book live in the kitchens of both rural and urban families, and may it show up at farmers markets as a resource and reminder that now is the time for the local food movement and the local medicine community to be connected.

— Deb Soule, herbalist and author, *How to Move Like a Gardener: Planting and Preparing Medicines from Plants*

HEAL *LOCAL*

20 Essential Herbs for Do-it-Yourself HOME HEALTHCARE

DAWN COMBS

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Acknowledgments

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This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters related to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

Foreword

ON OUR PASTURE-BASED LIVESTOCK FARM IN VIRGINIA'S Shenandoah Valley, we assume nature's default position is wellness, not sickness. And if an animal does get sick, our first assumption is that we did something to upset the animal's immunological function. This is all in direct opposition to industrial farming's orthodoxy that says nature is fundamentally broken and we have to fix it. Or the corollary that if an animal is sick, it's merely pharmaceutically disadvantaged.

If I've learned one thing during my career as a beyond organic farmer, it is that when things aren't healthy, it's my fault. Always my fault. It's not the veterinarian's fault. It's not Monsanto's fault. It's not my parents' fault. Owning the health of our plants and animals is the first step toward proper husbandry and care.

Who is responsible for your health? If you said "the doctor" you'd be wrong. If you said "I am" you'd be right. Dependency on experts is epidemic in our culture. It's almost like a disease. Generalists are dismissed as underachievers.

If our child isn't doing well in school, we blame the teacher, or grandma's intelligence genes. If our financial investments go south, we blame the financial advisor, or big bad Wall Street businesses. If we get lost on a trip, we blame the GPS voice. If we eat junk food, we say we're too busy to eat better, know our farmer, or don't know how to cook. We say we need an expert to teach us. Goodness, if our relationship goes sour, we blame the internet dating service.

Perhaps nowhere is this expert dependency more acute than in the healing professions. The idea that we can actually know our body, know herbs, and make our own in-home do-it-yourself apothecary is as foreign as

flying to Pluto. But in complete opposition to this helplessness and victim-oriented mindset, Dawn Combs dares to make the case for personal education and responsibility.

It's the next step beyond the know-your-farmer, know-your-food movement. In fact, Dawn illustrates the relationship between the kitchen and the medicine cabinet. Certainly the progression from food to medicine is as natural as day following night. Just like any skill, what seems intimidating at first becomes second nature once you're familiar with the process.

The Heal Local idea really boils down to self-empowerment and liberating ourselves from the stranglehold of the professional medical orthodoxy. And now that the government has inserted itself more aggressively into the medical community, the orthodoxy will become more codified and promoted. Native peoples in virtually all geographic areas enjoyed a profound understanding of medicinal plants. Growing up in what we call primitive cultures entailed acute awareness of edible weeds and their various healing properties.

But in our techno-sophisticated culture, we've summarily dismissed this kind of information as irrelevant. Dawn's compelling case for re-informing ourselves with these ancient healing arts re-connects us to the sheer abundance and provision of our ecological nest. We've not been set adrift into a complicated orthodoxy of dependence; we know more now than ever. We have the technology to leverage medicinal properties in countless plants better than any of our ancestors.

So let's get on with it. Today the average American male between 25 and 35 years of age spends 20 hours per week playing video games. Is self-reliant health care less important than that, or keeping up with the latest dysfunction in Hollywood celebrity culture? We really do have the capacity to rediscover this ultimately self-empowering, democratized medical option. To be clear, Dawn does not secede from medical doctors. She does, however, advocate interviews to find doctors who fit a home-based medical regimen.

This book will walk you through the process, from initial interest to a home apothecary. Rather than a sanctimonious attitude, Dawn exhibits an appreciative can-do spirit that uplifts individual initiative and respects the

awesomeness of natural healing. I hope this book awakens in you a thirst and hunger for medicinal plants in a Heal Local context.

Joel Salatin
Farmer, Author, Local Food Advocate
Polyface Farm

Preface

HEAL LOCAL STARTED AS A GUIDE FOR MY HUSBAND who needed to know how to do what I do for family health when I wasn't around. The ailments that are listed here are an expansion of the conditions our immediate and extended family wanted to know how to treat at home.

Somewhere along the way to writing our family health guide I became obsessed with the need to have fresh, local medicine just as much I needed fresh, local food. I needed that local medicine to be simple and I had to keep all the information I was collecting from becoming overwhelming for my husband who didn't love health research in the way I did. With all of this in mind, this home guide expanded almost all on its own into something that I wanted to give to every household I could reach.

This book is intended to provide both a quick guide to immediate health issues as well as long-term strategies to address more complex illnesses. You will find shaded bands on the edges of the book; they correspond to body systems with which an illness may be associated. Emergency issues are grouped together first regardless of health issue and instead are alphabetized. Each illness or emergency is explained, and I suggest how herbs may be applied. Natural therapies and their techniques are in a separate section.

There are many, many ways to use herbs both internally and externally. As you personalize your medicine cabinet, it is important to remember that you may find some of your treatments located in the kitchen as well. Be creative with how you use the herbs; this is an art and can and should be fun. Remember that herbs should be approached with respect, not fear. Learn the herbs that must be handled in a specific way, and follow the rules.

Beyond that, approach these herbs with the sense of confidence I hope this book will give to you.

The herbs that I have selected illustrate what you might do in your own home. This is not a book written on the 20 herbs that every household should use in their medicine cabinet. Some of the herbs I've selected to treat an illness would not necessarily even be considered *specific*, or typically indicated for the condition.

As an herb farm, our apothecary is now sizeable after years of growth. Like us, take your own change toward local healing in "baby steps" to keep from being overwhelmed.

Remember that any health problem is nuanced by your specific body makeup. The intention of *Heal Local*, especially in dealing with the more chronic imbalances, is to show how you may build an apothecary using a small number of herbs. My explanations of each of the problems, what you might have to address and how you would use each of the herbs in my sample apothecary is not intended to tell you how to address the problem from all angles in your unique situation. If you are working on a health issue at home, it is important that you build an apothecary that addresses your specific health profile; it's also important to work with an experienced practitioner to help you build a thorough protocol.

Every home is different, and every individual is different. For each illness or crisis you will see how I would apply the herbs that I selected for this book's apothecary. You will also note that I have sometimes suggested alternatives. If you don't have the herbs I am using locally, or if your body does not respond to them favorably, then feel free to swap out my original suggestion with your own.

It is my hope that *Heal Local* offers a framework you can use to design your own small, locally sourced apothecary.

If you or a family member have a serious health issue that you are working to address, please be aware that the herbs I selected may not be the best choice for you. Your apothecary may need to grow over the 20 herbs recommended here. I challenge you though, that as you select a specific other than the ones named that you look into all of its chemical properties. With any substitution you may be able to care for many other health issues and thus whittle down the size of your apothecary anyway.

Creating your own medicine garden need not be as elaborate as a formal medicine wheel, but can be as simple as a spot in your landscaping or planters on your patio.

Above all, it is my intention to assure you that taking care of health issues at home does not need to be intimidating. You don’t need another room on your house or ten years of intensive training.

Caring for your family can be as simple as going out your back door to your garden or as rewarding as visiting your favorite grower or herbalist at the local farmers market. As you begin to patronize those hardworking healers, makers, sellers and growers in your own community you will see a shift. Restaurants will need to stock cleaner food and grocery stores will buy local medicinal preparations that you once had to order online from far away. Doctors in your community who once had the weight of the world on their shoulders may find room in their schedule to talk with you longer and work in partnership because they aren’t seeing as many patients for things that should not be their responsibility.

You will be amazed how quickly the action of taking control of your own health will produce big changes in your community.

Introduction

I WROTE *HEAL LOCAL* with the belief that our medicine should be local, sustainable, empowering and personal. Healing traditions in the US have progressed in a sinuous path rather than a straight line. At the beginning of our nation there were Native Americans who knew how to use the products of their environment to maintain health and to arrest the development of disease. The United States developed as a melting pot of both what was here when the settlers came as well as what they brought from their own mother cultures. Before long the foundations of Western medicine entered the picture, at times incorporating both native traditions and historical modalities. In the early 19th century, medical treatment was becoming more and more detrimental to the health of the human body. Thomas Jefferson commented at the time, "The patient, treated on the fashionable theory, sometimes gets well in spite of the medicines."[1] The rise of the Eclectic Movement of healing, going back to the roots of healing and incorporating native knowledge and alternative therapies, came out of this frustration. The windows were opened, and a fresh breeze blew through the halls of medicine. When modern medicine gained its footing once again, it was improved by the contributions of these great Eclectic thinkers. We would see the arc of Western medicine continue on for another couple of hundred years until we come to our present day.

I believe that once again we are at a crossroads in health. Once again, Western medicine has become imbalanced. While it is outstanding at heroic medicine, the system has overstepped its place both from ambitions within and pressures from us, the patients, without. Western medicine is not set up to maintain health, but rather to apply battlefield treatment, to stop the

bleeding. Thus we have a symptoms remediation approach based in a triage mentality rather than a focus on treating underlying conditions and promoting overall system balance.

We cannot, should not and need not throw out all current practices. There is no reason to deny ourselves all the best of what is available. However, in this moment, modern medicine is unsustainable. We can benefit ourselves, and that system that contains so many wonderful advances, by simply reasserting control over our everyday health. When we do, we reduce the demands we place on it to an appropriate level. How do we do that?

Local medicine should include changing the mindset of your local garden center to stock the medicinals you desire.

Local

If we see the value in buying our vegetables locally, why on earth would we be satisfied with medicine of unknown origin and handling? Creating a local economy in a community of growers, makers, educators and herbalists is critical for our society.

In the US, the health of our general population is poor to say the least. We have lost connection to the knowledge of self care; health care has come to mean care for the sick, not promotion of health. Not only that, but health care in its current form is financially unattainable for many. To return to a localized health care system is to make health and wellness available to all in a very different form than is popularized in political and media circles. Access to and free choice of the means to maintain health *is* a basic human right. It is *not*, however, a basic human right to have Western medicine exclusively mandated for all. This notion of basic human needs is falsely predicated on the belief that everyone desires to participate in Western treatment. A return to balance must involve the use of local plants readily available in backyards and vacant city lots. A renewed interest in education and personal responsibility will help us to own our health decisions, from what we eat to how we choose to live. Finally, it is essential that we turn away from a societal structure that insists everyone is predestined to experience illness and instead embrace a life that is rich and vital every day as a result of balanced health choices.

Sustainable

Much is made of this word, but simply put, our medicine is not sustainable if it does not address underlying causes of imbalance. It is not sustainable if our care providers are overloaded to the point that they are not able to provide their services in a meaningful way. It is not sustainable if we overharvest the plants that we depend upon for valuable medicine. I believe strongly in a whole plant methodology of treatment. We must be careful that our demands on the plant world involve plans to replant, grow our own and wildcraft responsibly.

Empowering

Part of taking responsibility for one’s own health care is to understand that health care goes beyond the walls of a clinic, pharmacy or hospital. It is sharing the knowledge of how food, lifestyle and supplementation all have an impact on how well we feel every day. Those who choose to hurt their bodies choose the inevitable health problems that result. Our current system of medicine allows us to choose the crime but tries to help us avoid the punishment. A call to Heal Local, then, is about making us aware of our choices so that we make them consciously.

Approachable

Raising your own medicine and caring for your own health and that of your family cannot be exclusive to only those people who have been raised in the knowledge or who have studied forever. This ability needs to be scalable to wherever people live, while also being easy for ordinary people to understand and to readily apply.

Raising your own whole foods and medicines is a family activity that can be instilled at an early age.

Personal

One size fits all does not work in health care, whether it be Western medicine or alternative care. Every body is different, and every ailment comes from a different source of dysfunction. It is imperative that we know our own bodies and those of our family before we design a home health care plan. My family may have more headaches than yours, and your family's conditions may involve asthma. You must design your apothecary to fit your unique situation. It is important also to note that there is no "one" herb that fixes a particular problem. Often there are *specifics:* these are herbs that have been used with great success throughout recorded history for a specific ailment. Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) could be considered a specific for sleep problems. It is, in fact, very helpful for many people. However, it can cause some people to become hyperalert and have a hard time going to sleep. In other words, simply assuming that an herb is right for every body based on your own success or someone else's advice is insufficient unless you also take into consideration their personality, the reason for the ailment and the energy of the plant and person together. If you are a beginner, this is important because you might try a specific for a certain ailment and find that you are not getting results. The complicated interplay of chemistry between plant and person may be the problem. Instead of becoming frustrated or abandoning a plan to try natural therapies, it is more reasonable in this instance to simply try a different herb. For instance, in the case of sleep problems, if valerian isn't right for you, you may try hops (*Humulus lupulus*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) or many others.

You can create a local medicine community where you live while occasionally buying something from the other side of the country. You may find something that shows promise in clinical and historical use for an individual health problem, but it is growing somewhere else on the planet. There is no reason why you should feel guilty purchasing it. I recently came across a great plant called jackass bitters (*Neurolaena lobata*). It's from the rainforest of Belize. Not only is its history and efficacy irresistible, but buying it helps to preserve parts of this threatened habitat. The notion of Heal Local is not meant to be rigid. If you can find a plant that does the same thing for everyday wellness that is native to your area, substitute it.

Your local community is supported every time you buy something from your area rather than from across the country or the world.

The truth is that there are amazing plants in all corners of the globe. Our bodies are all very different. It just may be that there is a plant from some exotic locale that fits your individual pathology to a tee. There is no reason that your subscription to the local ideology should cause you to avoid buying the plant or miss out on the experience of full health. There is also no need to avoid planting annuals for use in your apothecary simply because they are not native. Family health is a very personal thing, as is how we grow our gardens and what we choose to support with our money. It is simply my intention to create a movement where the bulk of our energy in this area is focused on establishing local healing economies.

Part I:

Herbs at Home and in Our Communities

What is HONEY SPREAD?

Chapter 1:

From My Family to Yours

FOR YEARS I WAS IN CHARGE OF HEALTH AND FIRST AID ISSUES in our home. It is a stressful position to hold at times, taking on the responsibility of health care decisions and assuming the repercussions when you are wrong. It is also a pitiable position to hold. When the keeper of all the knowledge falls ill, you'd better hope you've left good instructions! I found myself repeatedly instructing my husband from my sickbed in how to take care of me. When you are sick, of course, you need to focus your energy on healing. It is much nicer to be able to close your eyes and have others care for you.

My husband Carson is no dummy; while I was nursing him and our children through various illnesses, he paid attention. He had a working knowledge of the helpful herbs for each ailment. Unfortunately, he would make rookie mistakes like buying me a carton of ice cream for dinner when I was suffering with congestion from a cold. The purchase was well-intentioned, but exactly the wrong thing to serve for those symptoms.

Carson finally decided that I needed to write him a manual on how to treat common illnesses that included natural therapies, herbal remedies and appropriate foods. It had not occurred to me until then that we, as a society, had lost the knowledge required to treat a basic sickness at home. As our Western medical model has moved more into the forefront, we have disconnected from the notion that what we eat can make us sick. The idea that what we eat can also have a healing effect is not even in the conversation. When we bought into the notion that sickness is healed with a pill, syrup or shot with no other considerations, we lost a wholistic model of maintaining our own health.

As I set about writing the manual for Carson to step into my responsibilities when it was my turn to be sick, I became aware that this book would be valuable to many more families than my own.

Most herbals either profile a set number of herbs and share all the illnesses they can address, or discuss a health issue and list as many herbs that might help as possible. It is my intention to demonstrate with *Heal Local* that knowledge of an endless list of herbs is not necessary to keep yourself or your family healthy.

RACHAEL BRUGGER

*A weed that is commonly sprayed in yards, plantain (*Plantago *spp.) is readily harvested and used on our farm to treat a wide range of ailments.*

It is possible to know a handful of herbs very well and use each one for multiple purposes. Most herbs contain a spectrum of active phytochemicals

that do not act in the way we are accustomed with allopathic medication. When we receive a drug from the doctor or over-the-counter, we expect that it will only perform the one action listed on the label. In contrast, some herbs can have so many actions in the body that they can practically serve as your medicine chest all on their own.

There is a recent trend toward a preference for the use of essential oils. They require little storage, travel well and are easy to dispense. I would argue that when you narrow down your medicine chest to a few multi-purpose herbs you can accomplish the same thing. Home health care does not need to be intimidating either in the space needed for storage or in the scope of information that needs to be accumulated before undertaking this important work.

For a number of years now I have been a big proponent of whole plant medicine. I believe strongly that when we isolate components from the plants, as we do in Western medicine and some natural medicine, we are missing out on components we don’t understand and are more apt to suffer unintended side effects. There is a responsibility that comes along with speaking this belief publicly. If everyone on the planet went out and started harvesting whole plants from their neighborhood wild places, we would quickly overharvest our natural medicine resources in a very short period of time. In fact, organizations like United Plant Savers were founded to protect our plant allies from just this sort of thing. Read more about them in Appendix A. There are currently a number of plants that were overharvested in the United States and Canada before we could put plans to protect them in place. We must be able to use our plants, but it must be done in a sustainable way.

Even if space is limited to a patio or deck, you can grow a significant portion of your herbal needs in planters and pots.

A sustainable small apothecary, then, necessarily means using space wisely, growing as much of your own herb as possible (reducing the need for costly and polluting practices in shipping) and protecting our wild herbs. No need to pull from around the globe; instead we can make things right in our own backyards.

Chapter 2:

The Importance of Local

I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALL HAVE THE ABILITY to walk into our backyard and pick what is needed for any minor home emergency. Western medicine and natural therapies have become polarized unnecessarily. It can be inappropriate to give away our power entirely in either direction. In the case of our current society's infatuation with Western medicine, many have let go of their personal power and lost their herbal birthright. This has led to a situation where every health decision — along with our personal and financial security — is given over to someone in a white coat. It can be frightening to assert our independence and take back our decision-making ability in this area.

As a new mother, it was my intention to exercise this independence, but it meant I took on responsibility of the health and safety of my child in ways that I wouldn't have needed to otherwise. We maintain a balance in our home that is the central theme of the book I would like to share with you. We take care of most of our health crises at home with herbs and other natural methods. In each situation we weigh what Western medicine has available to us against the severity of the situation and what we can do ourselves. Western medicine is very good at quickly addressing symptoms and averting disaster in very dangerous and serious situations. If one of us has a broken bone, we will head to a hospital. Natural first aid does not need to set one method of healing against another; instead it should incorporate the best of all worlds. If we can take care of something here at home, simply and without subjecting ourselves to waiting room bacteria, we will do so. Couldn't everyone have these basic skills? As health care systems come under pressure, we can find ways to allow citizens to take

responsibility once again for their health. This will relieve both overburdened staff in clinics and hospitals and overburdened family budgets.

Who gets to be self-sufficient? Is it only the “crunchy” families who have some land and the desire to homestead in the current sense of the word? I don’t believe so. Self-sufficiency does not have to be an all-or-nothing prospect. Instead it should be scalable. Self-sufficiency in home health is attainable for the apartment dweller as well as the farmer living on 100 acres.

Sustainability is a hot button topic right now. Very simply, the way we practice health through the Western medical paradigm is not sustainable. As we continue to chase the next symptom, our bodies become more and more structurally unsound. We need to get back to fixing the foundational issues we have in our lives rather than only seeking a quick fix.

As patients of the Western medical system have become accustomed to demanding an instant result, we have created a self-perpetuating cycle within our communities. We expect doctors to be godlike, holding them accountable in a legal manner for that which they should never have been responsible. In defense, Western medical practice and education has tried to act godlike, dispensing from on high and brooking no questions. In an effort to provide the patient with what he/she wanted rather than what they needed, our medical establishment has overreached itself. Both sides must change in order for healing to begin. We cannot demand that someone else inappropriately take responsibility for our personal health and then chastise them for damage that is created when they do so.

We can take back both our responsibility and our power. Western medicine can again be a beloved profession when doctors are consultants to informed patients who are responsible for their own actions and decisions. In the meantime, we can begin to fill the void that this disentanglement will cause. We have lost much of our traditional knowledge of home care. This has happened as a large medical system has struggled to gain more power and attempted to discredit traditional knowledge. This has also happened as our culture has attempted to pull families out of the home and into full-time professional employment while discrediting the contributions of home caretakers.

Chapter 3:

Both Food and Medicine — Buy Local or Grow Your Own

IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BECOME MORE AWARE as a society that there are a lot of good reasons to buy local or grow our own food. Food that has been shipped to our neighborhood grocery store from all over the country, and sometimes all over the world, is less fresh and nutritious. It is often picked before peak ripeness and either allowed to color up on its journey or artificially ripened using ethylene gas. Vegetables that are picked ripe and shipped long distances have usually been selectively bred or genetically engineered to allow them to remain shelf stable for a longer amount of time.

Selective breeding is not inherently evil. Humans have been interacting with plants in this way, altering the genes of our plant companions to our liking, since we began harvesting plants for food. The problem is that, when we select for one trait, we are deselecting for another. In the case of shelf stability, we select away from natural sugar content, and we often lose quite a bit of nutritional benefit. We wind up with a red tomato that will sit on the counter for a couple of weeks, but isn't as juicy, flavorful or packed with vitamins as its heirloom variety cousins. Selective breeding is *not* genetic engineering. It is a false argument to say that genetic engineering is safe because we have been selectively breeding for centuries. Genetic engineering involves the mixing of organisms that would not mix in nature and therefore would not result from selective breeding. Genetic engineering is not merely a speedier solution; it is a dangerous gamble in the safety of the genes of humanity as we attempt to digest these new compounds.

We all love the feeling of knowing where and how our produce is grown — but shouldn't we place the same emphasis on our medicine choices?

When we buy our vegetables locally, we can often saunter down to the farmers market and talk with the farmer ourselves. We can get to know them personally and understand how they grow, what weeding practices they employ, how they manage soil fertility and more. In a world where we can no longer all grow all of our own food, personal connections such as these maintain our relationship with the land.

When we buy in the store there is no personal contact with anyone who actually grew the food we find there. We don't know how many chemicals were sprayed or what kind. We don't know if the food was grown on nutrient-rich soils or those that have been farmed for years with nothing returned to them. Our meat comes in sterile, plastic-wrapped containers already broken down to consumable parts that no longer resemble the animal from which they came. In this case, it becomes easy to disassociate ourselves from the sacrifice it takes for an animal to become our meal. We do not need to "look our dinner in the eye" because all of the parts that would remind us of its cuteness have been removed. Buying exclusively from the store feeds our disconnection from food and from the land.

In an age where we are concerned about pollution, buying local often means that food has travelled fewer miles, avoiding a big carbon footprint when we put dinner on the table. If we grow our own, there may not be any carbon consequences at all to walk out the back door and bring in a salad.

Finally, buying local puts money into the economy of the communities in which we live. We help to support our neighbors who are raising broilers in the way we wish we could if we had the land to do so. Buying a bunch of carrots directly from a farmer means that a larger percentage of our food dollar goes into the pocket of the person who grew it for us.

I have watched this movement from my farmers market booth for some time. As huge crowds swarmed the tables of fresh greens and strawberries, I wholeheartedly agreed with the basis for their enthusiasm to “Buy Local.” However, I think it’s long overdue that we extend this enthusiasm beyond just our food and begin to apply it to our medicine as well.

Why is it important to buy a local potato, but when we need to relieve a headache, that bottle of pills of unknown origin on a shelf will do? The exact same standards we apply to our food must apply to our medicine.

When we grow our own or buy local we can connect to our medicine in a more personal way. In fact, it should never have been separated from our food in the first place. This connection is important even when buying natural health products.

If you buy an encapsulated herb from the grocery store, how do you know when it was harvested? Was it raised on healthy soils without chemicals? Was it harvested at the peak of medicinal potency, or when someone had the time to clearcut an entire crop? Was it harvested at noon on a hot day when the volatile oils were escaping or during the cool of the morning when they were at their highest levels in the leaf? How long were the herbs stored before they were made into capsules? How long were the capsules stored before you began using them? There are a million questions that matter a great deal; they equate to the efficacy of the herb.

As our culture begins to move more toward using whole plant medicine, there are continual cries of fraud. Herbs are complex in their ability to heal, but from a scientific and practical standpoint they contain phytochemicals that break down at each step of plant development and processing. If a plant is not harvested when at its peak, not handled and processed appropriately and not used within a reasonable time frame, it is unfair to expect amazing

and/or immediate results. When we don’t know what quality entails, and worse, we don’t seek it out, we get what we pay for. Until we begin to look for the same qualities in our medicine that we do in our food, our medicine will not provide the results we are seeking.

Just as we want the freshest, best-tasting vegetables, we should also expect the most vibrant, potent herbs for our medicinal choices.

Healing locally, then, entails buying from a local farmer or growing our herbal medicine ourselves. When you buy from someone in your community who is growing herbs with healing intent, you can ask them how they do what they do. You can see firsthand the difference in quality when you see the fresh, deep green of properly harvested and dried nettle (*Urtica dioica*) next to a bag that has been commercially prepared.

Your local market, like this summer market in Columbus, Ohio, should provide options for herbal body care, first aid and other high-quality, healthful preparations in addition to foods.

Your farmer can tell you about the day they harvested; your grocer can read the name on the front of the bin for you and little else.

When you buy from a local herbalist or grower, you are supporting an economy in your own backyard. Again, just as with food, your money goes directly into your community without middlemen. You are assured of quality and freshness and don't have to sacrifice effectiveness due to dubious age. You can also be assured of less pollution, as the medicine did not have to be created in a factory or shipped across country in a big truck.

There is one other very big benefit that I wish more people would talk about in regard to local medicine. The notion is commonplace when we discuss wine, cheese or even chocolate. *Terroir* is a consideration of how the location from which a food item originated has a specific geology, geography and climate that interacts with the plant genetics that make it up in a unique way. The result is kind of a "chicken-soup" effect — the same ingredients in several different mothers' pots all taste different somehow. The idea of *terroir* is that the soil in which the grapes are grown imparts a unique flavor profile and character to the resulting wine; this is an important consideration to wine connoisseurs. There are very similar phenomena that occur with the plants we use for medicine.

If we accept that there is something about the way we interact with the living world around us that imparts a unique flavor profile to our food, why then can we not accept that it is the same with medicinal compounds within that food? With each soil type, a given medicinal plant will vary in its chemical makeup from region to region. Herbal medicines may even differ depending on the other plants that can be found in the neighborhood so to speak. Comfrey (*Symphytum* spp.) that grows in Russian soils tends to have a higher concentration of pyrrolizidine alkaloids, and some comfrey species found growing in the United States tend to have less or none at all. Why is that? Could it be that there is a greater need for these compounds among the Russian people than Americans because of their given soils and climates? These are subtleties to ponder.

Plant adaptation occurs naturally in response to individual environments. It is driven by weather patterns, soil type, available nutrition and native pollinators and/or parasites. Carnivorous plants, for instance, have adapted to eat insects and small animals in response to an environment that is incredibly nutrient-poor. I believe we must pay attention to plant adaptations that occur in the area where we live because we are adapting to those variables as well. Let's take red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) for instance. Red clover is specifically adapted to fix nitrogen in the soil. It thrives where there is low nitrogen, usually in recently disturbed ground that is healing. Nitrogen is an abundant component here on earth, but most of it is unavailable to us unless it is fixed (broken down into a form that is usable by plants and animals) in some way. Humans generally benefit from nitrogen through plants. Nitrogen is the primary building block for amino

acids. In fact, red clover contains seven of the nine essential amino acids that humans cannot make themselves, and several of those that are nonessential.

We have lost connection with the soil from which our food grows. If you live on a piece of property, you drink the water, you eat plants that take in the nutrition available in the soil. You *are* the soil on which you live. Any imbalance in the soil will be reflected in your family's health. Therefore, those medicinal plants (you'll most often call them weeds) that are thriving in your environment are the best suited to address any imbalances you may have. When given the opportunity to do so, weeds are actively healing the soil, and they can do the same for the soil of our human bodies.

Taking that out to a community level, native medicinal plants that grow in your region often specialize in the common diseases of the area. Here in the middle of Ohio, we have quite a few plants that grow in the transitional areas between wet, boggy soil and dry, hard soil. This area of Ohio tends to have quite a prevalence of respiratory ailments that present as dampness or congestion in the lungs or sinus. Weather here is humid and tends to be wet a fair bit of the time. Because our environment tends to breed our most frequent illnesses, it is no coincidence that the plants we find growing nearby are specialists in treating those problems.

As I said when discussing the need to buy local for the sake of community and local economy, there is no reason to be rigid. This is not to say that you can't or shouldn't use plants from another area of the country or planet, but consider giving preference to those that have grown under the same weather and soil conditions as you, yourself have. One of the biggest mistakes we make is to romanticize native plants from a faraway locale as somehow superior to plants in our own backyards.

We order our herbs from mail-order companies who work with growers from around the world to collect everything we need to treat our families. Looking only at the exotic herbs that grow far away from where we live not only impacts our local economy, but it negates connections that we have to the land and our plants locally. We overlook the specific healing characteristics that local plants have for us because they come from the same soils from which we eat. Local medicines come from the same climate in which we maintain homeostasis. They soak in the same sunlight and grow under the same night sky.

Think locally and let portions of your lawn grow to provide red clover, plaintain, dandelion and other important medicinals free for the picking.

Take note of the so-called weeds that are growing in your area and eat them or use them predominantly as they present themselves seasonally. The plants from other parts of the globe undoubtedly contain beneficial phytochemicals, but by reconnecting with ourselves and the plants that grow in community with us, we might get to the root of our imbalances in a much simpler way.

Seasonal Medicine

Yes! There are seasons for herbs just like there are for vegetables. Red clover blooms in the spring and tends to dwindle (if not replanted) by the time we get into the middle of the hot summer. Traditionally, this blossom was used during its bloom time for cleaning out the congestion in our blood and liver that builds up during the winter. There is a power that can be had by using herbs as they are at their peak. They offer a synergy with our body's needs at the time of the season when they are at their best that we miss out on by using them out of season.

This concept is not as easy as black and white. There is, of course, no reason to avoid using an herb in the dead of winter when it is not freshly available. I preserve a bit of my herbal harvest when each plant is at its

peak each year, just as I do my green beans. This is done so that if I need to treat some ailment or other in the off-season, the plant is available to me. What we are missing in our current medically-dominated culture is the idea that these plants aren't there just for treatment. When we can grow our own or access a grower locally, we have the ability to use herbs as they are fresh to build up our good health. Following older traditions of adding herbs to our food and beverages as they are in season ensures that we are staying in balance with the seasonal changes all around us. Meeting the needs of the season as they are presented to us and remaining in balance builds up a strong and vital system that meets health challenges as they come without the need for treatments.

Chapter 4:

What Does a Local Medicine Community Look Like?

WHEN I FIRST STARTED GROWING HERBS in my current community I would head down to the farmers market and get a lot of confused looks. “Why would I buy stinging nettle?” was a common comment. My apprenticeship had taken place in Vermont, an established herbal community. Where I lived was a land of conventional agriculture and big box, discounted food. I spent years trying to find other people who were growing their own herbs or making herbal medicine. At one point I even hung flyers in bookstores and coffee shops advertising a gathering to no avail. I finally decided that if I wanted a local medicine community, I needed to build it.

There are certain cities and regions around the US where local medicine communities have sprung up. They are often found where a teacher or school is located. Sometimes they happen because an herbal conference takes place in the area. Unfortunately, this means that there are large areas where people still wonder why on earth you would sell a weed like stinging nettle at the farmer’s market. It would be easy for all of us to move into the communities that speak our language, but that is not necessarily where help is needed.

If our health care landscape is to change, we need people who will do the work of creating local medicine communities where there are none. This intentional community building takes time and patience.

Find Allies

I realized very quickly that there wasn't a market for the herbal products I wanted to sell. At the farmers market I would occasionally meet someone in those first few years who knew the value of what I was offering. These people became my earliest allies and longtime friends. We have worked alongside each other in our community bringing health awareness each in our different ways. I knew that if I wanted customers, I needed to tell them why they wanted to buy from me, and I needed to speak in a language that they understood.

At Mockingbird Meadows, we started out making honey. We allied ourselves with the local Slow Food movement. If you are living in an area that does not have a natural health culture, the food movement is a good place to begin. Food is understandable. Our culture as a whole is permeated with considerations about what is healthy to eat, organic versus conventional, nutritional (over)analysis and local versus global. Many people are already comfortable with how choices at the end of the fork affect our health and that of the world around us. The issues in the food movement are closely aligned with the issues in a Heal Local movement.

Our herbal health farm has honed our educational offerings and changed our herbal products over time as local awareness about medicinal herbs has evolved.

Our community was filled with foodies. Who doesn't love food? We quickly realized we needed to meet people at the plate. We started with a unique field to table experience that was part education and part healing food. We chose a theme for each meal, such as the Wort Moon in August. This allowed us to offer a meal filled with items such as roasted burdock root salad and nettle. The food brought in medicinals that aren't normally highlighted in North American cuisine. We also included a tour of our herb farm and discussed the necessity of these plants and their health benefits. If you serve really good food and show your guests how to make it, they are more apt to adopt beneficial plants in their lifestyle.

Our farm products early on highlighted items that were medicine used as food. Our community has become more conversant with herbal medicines over the years. We are now able to be successful with products that are primarily medicinal in nature, such as tinctures and salves.

Food may not be the best avenue in all communities. Perhaps there is a local brewery in the town where you live. Herbal apertifs, cordials and small beers may be the local language of acceptance. Maybe you live in a large conservationist community near a national park that would understand a focus on medicinal plant conservation.

Share Freely

Education is absolutely the most important cornerstone to building a local medicine community. You cannot create a culture like this from behind a prescription pad. For eight years I stood behind the tables of our market booths throughout the city answering questions, offering to do research for people and filling requests for special needs. I offered classes both on our farm and at other locations at low cost with an eye to keeping the information accessible to everyone. I invited other practitioners to share what they knew and treated everyone with respect, because they all had something different to bring to the table. This was, of course, good for my business, but more than that it encouraged my local medicine culture.

Meet People Where They Are

I've alluded to this point already, but it bears repeating. If I had simply continued to put that nettles package out week after week and hoped for it

to catch on, our farm would have failed. You can't stand in an ideology that is far away from the people you wish to include and stubbornly hope they will come join you. You have to be able to go out into your community and speak a common language. You must provide only that for which they are looking and are ready. If you are wise, you will let your business and its offerings grow with the knowledge level or acceptance in your community.

We live in a city that is dominated by a major university providing renowned medical education and treatment. As a result, people tend to be a bit leery of herbal whoody-whatty. You can't encourage a local medicine community by setting yourself up in opposition to the medical community, especially in a situation like ours.

A Butcher, A Baker, A Candlestick Maker

Finally, let's talk about where the rubber meets the road. Who are the players in a local medicine community?

Educators

Education is the foundation. Look around at the communities in North America that are thriving, and you will see something in common. There are always at least one or two great teachers or schools. Our current medical system is unsustainable. On some level, everyone knows this. We are all looking for answers, and it is important that we have plenty of reliable sources ready and waiting to provide a contrast to those who seek to take advantage. The first step to creating community is to share what you know. Not everyone is comfortable with standing in front of people. I hear all too often "I don't know enough, I'm not ready." The truth is that you know everything there is to know about your own experience. Maybe you don't know advanced medicine-making, but you know how to preserve food for the winter. We have lost so much of what it means to be self-sufficient in our own health care, and there are more aspects to it than you think. If you are truly not a teacher or writer, use your skills to support someone in your community who is.

Makers

Makers are necessary because we can’t do everything for ourselves. It is nice to know that if we really like to make body cream, perhaps there is someone else who really likes to make salves. Instead of everyone working round the clock to provide for their every need, in a local medicine community we can trade for necessities between ourselves. Makers must be very careful to make the best products they know how to make in the cleanest way possible and follow all known state and federal regulations. If the herbal community is to move forward, it must take the responsibility of medicine-making very seriously. The damage that can be done in a small community by a medicine-maker who does not follow this advice can be devastating.

If education is the mother of the community, her children are the doers. Out of education come those who are talented at making all kinds of products that are needed to maintain health. This can be medicine, it can be tools, it might be something we haven’t even heard of yet. As I teach I look over my students and marvel at how they will be inspired to use what they hear. I am in awe of how each of our unique backgrounds is used to improve the community in new ways. Makers provide us with the products and tools locally that we might otherwise need to have shipped to us from afar.

Growers

Growers are a very important group to cultivate. They are perhaps some of the most unsupported members of the local medicine community, and this must change. Without an educated community of buyers it is hard to explain the true cost of a properly raised medicinal herb. When someone can go to the store and buy a big bunch of fresh parsley for $1, it is hard to understand that an ounce of properly dried red clover can cost $8–$9. Ask a hard working organic vegetable grower and they will tell you they struggle as well with a fundamental valuation problem coming from the consumer. If we want high quality herbs as the basis of our medicine — and I assure you that we do — we have to change our ideas of what the contribution of a grower is worth. It can be helpful for growers to enlist the aid of apprentices and volunteers as part of the hands-on education. This will often help community members understand the value that must be placed on food and

medicine so that farmers can grow the plants we need and still support their families.

Those who wish to grow medicinal plants may come out of community education. They may also be in place already, growing something else entirely. If you live in a metropolitan area it may be difficult to find someone with plenty of land to start a growing operation. You can always find someone at a farmers market who is growing vegetables. Look for organic and biodynamic producers. If you can demonstrate to them that you will help secure a market for a few medicinal herbs, they will often grow for you. When you approach them with a request to grow calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), for instance, the more outlets for their crop that you can demonstrate the better. There may be a health food store in town that would like to carry local herbs. You might be making products that contain calendula and need raw materials. It is good to also show them the culinary possibilities of any herb you would like grown. Calendula can be added to salad blends, thus giving them a reason to grow a large patch and sell retail to vegetable customers or CSA members as well as wholesale to you. Offer to show interested farmers how the herb can be grown, or to partner by tracking down information. Coordinate classes on calendula organized around their crop availability. If you have a blog, offer to blog about the herb in advance and again just as it is ready for harvest. Cross promote the farmer who is growing it and share where readers might find his or her farmers market booth.

Can’t find a grower at your local farmers market? Reach out to conservation organizations such as United Plant Savers or national herbal organizations such as the American Herbalists Guild or the Herb Society of America, who encourage local chapter organization.[1] Get involved in farming and gardening associations. Here in our area we have an organization called the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA).[2] It is a place for growers and eaters to get together and share education and information in community, and it is a perfect place to look for people whose thoughts are in line with a local medicine movement.

The grower group doesn’t only include those who are growing herbs for consumption. It is also important to those people locally who are growing plants from seeds and running excellent nurseries to supply gardeners with

medicinals for the landscape. Without specialized growers it can be very difficult to find some of the more obscure and hard to grow medicinals. Help them to respond to the demand your community will place on their nurseries, and they will reward you with the plants you want to enjoy in meditative gardens, study in depth and raise on a commercial level. Here in Ohio, my favorite plant nursery is called Scioto Gardens.[3] I volunteered to run through their plant availability list and give them documentation on everything that had a history of medicinal use. They were able to add this information to their plant labels and offer a richer education to their customers on the plants they sell.

Partners

Partnerships within your community are very important. It is important to strategize with others rather than merely purchasing. Share with them visions of the community that you are trying to build, and give them a chance to imagine how they might like to contribute. A community that is built with many voices meets many more needs than you, as one person, can imagine. Your network might include local distillers and winemakers who could provide the raw materials for tinctures and cordials. We have friends who run local magazines and newspapers here in our area. *Edible Columbus* and *Natural Awakenings* are great magazines that are franchised.[4] You likely have a magazine like them that is run by people who live in your area and understand your local culture. SlowFood, Weston Price and the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund (FTCLDF) have local chapters filled with people who have similar interests and have worked very hard to create an infrastructure that might align with your goals.[5]

Restaurants more and more are bragging on their menus about their use of locally sourced goodies. They can be important partners in creating a local medicine culture. Just as you cannot build a successful herbal healing protocol for a client without proper food, you cannot build a local medicine community without a local healthy food community.

Beekeepers are of course a community that is close to my heart. They are also a valuable asset to the Heal Local movement. Supporting this community means access to properly raised honey and pollen. It also means

access to locally raised raw materials such as beeswax. The makers in your community will need beeswax for lotions and honey for syrups and elixirs.

It is wise to create partnerships with researchers and university professionals as well. I believe that Western herbalism can get too heavily focused on phytochemicals and lab results, but we must be able to converse on this level with our community. Medically focused studies on plants are a valuable contribution to knowledge at this time. We simply cannot stand up in the communities where work is to be done and strictly adhere to the folkloric and spiritual aspects of plants. We won't be heard, and I think rightly so. There is scientific knowledge to be had in relation to why we use plants for medicine, and researchers are the key to getting at it. To keep medicine truly local, we must be able to look at forgotten plants in our local environments and understand if there is potential within them. A local university with chemistry students, a grower and an herbalist can make a powerful team to unearth knowledge that may be found hidden in an undervalued fence row.

As you build partnerships, don't forget that there will be other local herbalists who have been practicing behind closed doors, caring for their families; they may even have small shops and farms. There is more work to be done than there are workers when it comes to local medicine. It simply isn't worth the time and effort to compete when we can team up and work together instead. In almost every case you will find that even if two herbalists are making similar tinctures, there is something about them that makes the medicine completely different and suitable to two very different customer bases. Work together, and you both will benefit. Compete and the message is diluted, the movement is weakened and less people are ultimately brought into the new era of health care.

Sellers

Sellers put much of the community together and make it easy to access. A small herb shop in a local medicine community can be a hub of information. It is a place for makers and growers to sell their wares. Most importantly, it is an understandable and easily approachable location for those in your community who are not very far along on their path to wellness. Sellers may also be found at local farmers markets where the

customer base is looking for fresh, local goods. Wherever these community members are found, they should be working hard to support their local medicine economy, and paying fair prices for goods from all the other members of the community.

Medical Professionals

Physicians are very important partners in an intentional medicine community. So much cultural buzz conjures images of a virtual boxing arena — with natural medicine on one side and Western medicine on the other. There is no reason for one side to devalue the contribution of the other. For us to truly Heal Local, we must involve interested physicians of all modalities. In many cases, the most receptive tend to be chiropractors, midwives, naturopaths, acupuncturists and massage therapists. In my experience nurses are often more receptive than MDs, but a preconceived notion on either side will cripple the movement. Heal Local is about complementary medicine. There are strengths and weaknesses on both sides of the supposed boxing ring.

We need physicians who are willing to work with their patients as valued and trusted expert consultants. We should be able to visit a doctor's office and ask for advice and diagnostics. Ideally that doctor may work with other practitioners with whom they may consult or provide access to their patients for consultation. A medical office that brought in a patient and showed them the options they might choose — ranging from Western medical prescriptions or surgeries to herbs, food changes, bodywork and other therapies — would be a truly integrated and successful one.

Volunteers and Apprentices

Volunteers and apprentices are a final piece of the puzzle. Most of the members of a local medicine economy aren't experiencing an abundance of worldly wealth, nor do they typically seek it. Regardless of our sensibilities about money or political trappings, the truth of the matter is that an energy transfer must take place within a successful community. If your community members aren't fed, the continuity is broken and the system disbands. There is a common assumption that if you are doing natural health work or

creative work such as art, you are supposed to operate outside the capitalistic realm.

When we give of ourselves, there is an energy exchange. You simply cannot continue to give and give without ever getting back. Eventually there is nothing left to give. Energy exchange can come in a lot of forms, and bartering and trading are alive and well and definitely have their place. In our culture, the way in which we keep food on our tables, a roof over our heads and a feeling of security in our homes is mostly through an energy exchange we call currency. Goods and services must be traded for currency not because we have a love of money over community, but because it is at its base the way we trade energy in our culture.

Healers and those that build healing communities often get lost in a feeling of guilt over needing this type of energy exchange to continue to move forward in their work. At the same time, our culture at large does not yet value some contributions as much as others. Often those of us who are doing very important work live very simple lives by both design and necessity. As we build these important communities across the country and around the world, we need to keep in mind that everyone who is working in the community must be fed, secure and compensated fairly for the work to continue to move forward fully nourished, vital and healthy. Those who are fed by knowledge and hands-on experience are truly angels from above to many an herbalist or grower.

On our farm, we have struggled with incorporating volunteers. Apprentices are only now on the horizon because we have progressed to a more in-depth training program. Those who are building must leave space for those who are willing to give time, expertise and energy. Those who have time, expertise and energy to give in exchange for experience and education should be emboldened to reach out and offer. This just doesn’t happen without you.

Chapter 5:

Growing the First Aid Garden

ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS to source your medicine locally is to grow it yourself! More and more of the US population is moving into cities and away from the farming way of life. I believe there is a prevailing belief that only those with large amounts of land can grow their own food or medicine. This is, of course, patently untrue. Anyone, regardless of where they are, can grow at least a small amount for her or himself. Even in the inner city where there are no balconies or backyards, there are abandoned lots and cracks in the sidewalk where food and medicine grow in abundance if only you know where and how to look.

When it comes to home health care, self-sufficiency can be scalable. In an apartment you may or may not have a balcony, but you can easily garden in pots inside or outside. In the city, green roofs are popping up everywhere. They seem to be currently designed either for beauty or for food, but what if the food gardens on urban rooftops could also contain local medicine? Community Gardens are a wonderful idea, but how many of them are growing medicine in the rows with their food?

Often, those who live in the suburbs worry that they cannot grow food or medicine because of zoning restrictions. There are many ways to source at least some of what you need, but you can do yourself a world of good to look into local rules and regulations before you get started.

First see if the municipality or the township has any gardening restrictions. Sometimes you can have gardens in the backyard, but you aren’t allowed to have them in the front. There are many media stories about people being taken to court for growing vegetables instead of lawn in their front yards. In 2013, a couple in Miami Shores, Florida were cited by

Code Enforcement and told to remove a vegetable garden the day after passage of a new ordinance.[1] The Ricketts family had tended the garden for 17 years without problem, but was suddenly threatened with daily fines by the city. They were eventually forced to pull up their plants. As of my writing, a lawsuit filed by the Institute for Justice against the city is pending that asserts that the right to grow food is protected under the state's constitution and that the ordinance is irrational because it singles out vegetables but does not prohibit flowers or fruit trees.

Whether vegetables or medicinal herbs, my philosophy has always been that we must know the rules to best find the loophole or way around them. Incorporating medicinal herbs and vegetables into traditional landscaping or growing in pots to tastefully decorate porches and decks is a great way to circumvent such restrictions. The community I lived in when I was first married was one of these restrictive places. I used my garden plants as decorative landscaping, tucking them in among more common things like arborvitae and viburnum. It was a satisfying bit of civil disobedience to step out the front door and pick a "decorative" tomato or pepper while waving to my suburban neighbors.

The clash between suburbia and those who prefer a more naturalized landscape appearance also grows every day. Most municipalities and now even rural townships and counties have legislation to limit the height of lawns and restrict so-called noxious weeds. Eschewing a lawn in favor of meadow or prairie plantings with wildflowers and medicinal herbs is arguably a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way to maintain residential property. Unfortunately, many medicinal herbs are considered noxious weeds by those in charge, and six inches is often the limit at which citations, threats and fines are issued. Until we redefine our notions of beauty when it comes to our lawns this clash will continue. Why on earth would we glorify an expanse of infertile ground covered in inedible green grass? Shouldn't we drive by a yard and say "Look at Fred's lawn! He's rich! Look at all that food and medicine growing everywhere!" instead?

Once you've gotten past local government, you also need to research your deed restrictions and your own homeowner's association. Unfortunately, these legal entities can be even more restrictive than local zoning regulations. Things you might find on your deed would be

prohibitions or limitations against vegetable gardens, particularly in more exclusive neighborhoods. Many homeowner associations also have design review processes that would require the submission of plans to receive approval prior to installing any gardens or landscape materials.

Instead of standing in front of an impartial board, it is sometimes harder to argue with your suburban neighbors who can potentially put a lien on your property if they don't like what you are doing. As the economy gets tighter and people are trying DIY lifestyles, we may hear more and more about such conflicts. Usually you can find a way to operate within the intent of the rule if not the letter of the law — and a well-timed homemade goodie basket may not hurt.

One of the hottest trends in suburban design is a new spin on an old concept called conservation design. Today *development-supported agriculture* (DSA) is becoming the latest outgrowth of community-supported agriculture (CSA). The intentional development of communities with a farm at their heart is a step back to the land, reimagining a time gone by. Communities with farms at their hearts have food growing steps away from modern homes and would be perfect places to reintroduce community medicine if they would add healing plants to their crop offerings.

Willowsford in Ashburn, Virginia, and Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois, are two such intentional communities.[2] Willowsford has introduced educational opportunities as part of its homeowner's association. They are primed to educate their community not just on how to preserve their tomatoes, but also on how to make their own tinctures and salves with the harvest of the fields.

If you have a lot of land, the number of plants that you can grow is much larger of course. You can easily get beyond the necessities and into the nice-to-haves. You can forage and allow more weeds to grow. There are so many plants that I would tell a first-time farm owner they had to have. Probably the best advice I would give, however, is to let the weeds grow. You must manage some spaces, of course, but if you can allow areas for weeds you will attract pollinators and other beneficial insects. Weeds will also provide an endless supply of free medicine. The weeds that I could not live without include dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), plantain (*Plantago* spp.), purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*),

chickweed (*Stellaria media*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), borage (*Borago officinalis*), burdock (*Arctium lappa*), yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*), mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) and nettle. Regardless of whether you live in the city or the country, weeds can be found everywhere. They are worth getting to know and adding to your apothecary whenever possible. If you have a lot of land, make it a project to explore a section each week and catalog what you find growing there. You may be surprised at the amount of medicine you have growing in areas you don't even need to manage.

Soil Health

It is important to understand that the quality of the soil in which you grow your food dictates the benefit you get from the medicine or food that is grown there. This is important whether you grow medicine yourself or source it locally. It is simply not enough to hear that the grower does not use chemicals, though that should definitely be part of your criteria.

If soil is nutrient deficient, there is nowhere for the plant to procure nutrition. Plants that are deficient are often sickly and plagued with pests and disease. Unfortunately, if the soil where it grows is calcium deficient, the plant you were hoping would be a good calcium supplement will not meet your expectations. This is the foundation for the myth that we can't possibly get the nutrition we need from our food and therefore need to use supplements instead. While I see some truth in this, the solution is not to abandon whole plant medicine and nutrition. Instead, the solution is to build soil fertility so that we heal our community from the ground up.

RACHAEL BRUGGER

Truly know your farmer's practices and how your food and medicine gets to market. Farming practices should go beyond chemical-free and focus on soil fertility to provide healthier, more nutritious food.

Many organic farmers are doing more than merely avoiding chemicals. Biodynamic farmers focus on the health of the soil first and foremost in their practices. Buying food and medicine from either conscientious organic or biodynamic farmers gives you a better understanding of how their plants are raised; this is part of the larger principle to know your farmers.

Soil improvement practices can be scalable. If you are hoping to grow your own, borrow a page from the farmers who are doing it correctly. Compost, vermiculture, properly prepared manure, green manure and compost teas can all be used in different ways in most settings. If you are specifically growing in pots and have a small space, it can be very easy to have your own worm bin to compost apartment food scraps. Once you obtain the worm castings, compost teas are an easy next step. Compost teas are one of my favorite methods of improving soil fertility. We use this tea in pots as well as on large garden plots.

How to Make a Compost Tea

Equipment:
five-gallon bucket
1 old pair of nylon hosiery
1–2 cups of compost or worm castings
fish tank bubbler

Scoop well-made compost or worm castings into the leg of an old pair of nylon hosiery and tie it closed with a knot. Drop this into a five-gallon bucket along with a fish tank bubbler and fill the bucket with water. Plug in the bubbler and leave the compost tea to aerate for 24–48 hours. It is imperative that you add the bubbler. Compost tea that steeps without aeration is anaerobic and not life-giving for your plants and soil. At the end of the time period, unplug your bubbler and use the resulting compost tea immediately.

Chapter 6:

Basic Harvesting Instructions

WHETHER YOU INTEND TO GROW AND HARVEST your own herbs or not, it can be valuable to understand what represents quality when it comes to family medicine. If you are hoping to buy from someone else, it is important that you ask how and when they are harvesting and processing so that you can be assured of freshness and quality.

Beyond questions about quality, it is important these days to ask about where the seller may have grown or harvested any plants that are threatened or at risk. United Plant Savers is the organization that maintains these lists (see Appendix A). There are more and more growers that are raising threatened medicinals or wild-harvesting in a sustainable manner. It is best to support one of them rather than to knowingly or unknowingly contribute to any further loss of our medicinal heritage.

There are some general rules of thumb about how to harvest medicinal herbs. Be aware that these are general for a reason. If you harvest outside of any of the preferred windows, don't worry that you can't possibly make use of your medicine. In most cases, harvesting later or earlier than peak medicinal potency will still give you some benefit.

Leaf — If you are harvesting a plant for its leaf, you will want to cut the plant just as it is beginning to develop flowers.

Flower — If you are harvesting for the flower, take it just as it is beginning to unfurl.

Root — Roots are best harvested in the spring before the plant has pushed new growth above ground, or in the fall when all the growth above ground has died back.

Fruit, Seed — Harvest these when they are ripe.

It is usually best to pick herbs in the morning just after the dew has dried but before the sun becomes intense — or in the evening just as the sun is sinking but before the dew has settled.

Drying should take place in a short period of time. Optimally, you have an environment that stays consistently between 90 and 110°F, has ample air flow and can block off direct light. The resulting dry herb should be minimally processed and packaged away from direct heat and light and kept somewhere away from moisture.

Herbs should be dried quickly to lock in the most vibrant and potent components.

Herbs retain their viability longer when they are grown, harvested and processed properly. The more “whole” you can get your herbs, the longer they will last. When you get them powdered, or powdered and encapsulated, the clock starts ticking pretty fast. Whole herbs should last you several years. Generally, leaves, flowers and dried fruits will last one to two years; and roots, barks and nuts will last two to three years. If you harvest or buy your own herbs, you should store them in glass away from

direct light, heat and moisture. If you begin to wonder if your herbs are still good after some years have passed, here’s how to tell:

Finding Quality Herbs

Color — The color should still be vibrant.

Smell — It doesn’t have to smell good. A lot of herbs actually have quite a stinky smell. If it’s still good, it should have a strong or striking smell.

Taste — Again, it doesn’t have to taste good, but it should still taste like it has something going on.

Effect — It should still give you the effect you expect.

Part II:

Herbal First Aid Methods

Elderberry
Syrup
Net Wt. 8 oz.
Herbal Cou
Aide
Premium Infused
Rose Petal Hony
2.25 oz.
Raw, Unfiltered and Uncooke
Premium Infused
Lavender

Chapter 7:

Preparing and Administering Herbal Medicines

IT'S A GREAT IDEA TO ACQUAINT YOURSELF with all the forms in which herbs can be taken or used medicinally. Every situation is unique when you are dealing with an illness. You will be working with different ages, overall wellness levels and diseases. The more techniques you know, the better equipped you will be to serve as your family's herbalist.

Tinctures (Extracts)

Tinctures are a fast way to get medicine into your family members. One of the benefits of preparing a tincture is that it can preserve an herb in its fresh form, especially any herb that is best taken fresh, making it available even in seasons where harvesting would be impossible. The concentrated nature of the herb in an alcohol, glycerite or vinegar medium goes straight into your bloodstream from your mouth rather than needing to be digested. A tincture is a great choice for acute situations.

Wine

Your favorite wine can be opened and infused to make a beneficial cooking wine, or you can make your own wine that is based on an herbal compound. Our fermented foods do not have to focus on intoxication, but rather can be a source for tonic healing.

One of our favorite herbal methods on the farm is to create a metheglin (herb-infused honey mead) with our rose petals.

To Make a Tincture the Simpler's Way

1. Select your medium — either alcohol (vodka and brandy are the most common, but you can use others), glycerite or apple cider vinegar.
2. Select a single herb or herbal combination. You may use dried or fresh. If you use fresh you will want to let it wilt a bit to reduce water content. If you are using fresh you will also want to chop it up well.
3. Fill a jar about two thirds full of fresh herb and slightly less than that of dried herb.
4. Pour alcohol, glycerite or vinegar over your herb, ensuring that there is at least one to two inches of liquid over the herbs. If you are using vinegar, be sure to warm it slightly first for best results.
5. Secure the lid and label the jar with the date, type of medium and herb.
6. Place the jar somewhere that you will see every day, that is room temperature and out of direct sunlight.
7. Shake the jar as often as you can; once a day would be perfect. This not only ensures proper infusion, but also potentizes your medicine with your personal intentions for its use.
8. Allow your tincture to steep for four to six weeks. The folkloric way is to start your tincture on the new moon and strain it at the following new or full moon depending on how long you steep it.
9. Strain the herb or herbal combination out of the liquid. This should be done through a fine cheesecloth or strainer. Be sure to squeeze the plant material well to remove all the goodness that is in it.
10. Bottle in amber glass bottles, label and use or store somewhere cool and out of direct sunlight.

Vinegar

Herbal vinegars are made with the same process as tinctures. If you use a high quality, raw and organic vinegar, they all have their own inherent healing benefit due to the balancing nature of the medium. Don’t just think of administering your medicine in a dropper; you can add your vinegar tincture to soups and salad dressings.

Glycerite

The phytochemical properties of your favorite herb can be impregnated into the medium of vegetable glycerine. Once you have a sweet glycerite in the cupboard this can be added to cocktails, summer beverages, given directly to children or used to make hard-to-take things more delicious.

Fresh herbs can be combined with vegetable glycerine and the sun's talents to create a tasty and sweet herbal treat.

Spirits

Many herbal preparations can be made while avoiding the use of alcohol, but there are some plants (such as echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*)) that

require high alcohol content to isolate what is needed. Brandy, vodka, grain alcohol or rectified spirit are common alcohols strong enough to isolate the necessary components of herbs. There are times however, when alcohol may not be appropriate. If you are uncomfortable taking an alcohol-based tincture, there are ways to remove the alcohol content prior to dosage.

Removing Alcohol Content

You can add your tincture dosage to about a half cup of water that has been brought to a boil and then removed from heat. Allow it to cool completely. You can also put the tincture directly in a spoon held over a flame for a few minutes. Always remember to cool down the tincture before using.

Oils

Infusing herbs into oil can be valuable for external use as well as culinary application. Garlic (*Allium sativum*) oil is a great example. Garlic oil is a staple to have in your medicine cabinet for ear infections, but in a pinch you can move it into the kitchen to use as a salad dressing base or as a drizzle for bread in the winter when you want to help your family fight off cold and flu. Be creative with your oils. What about a garlic, dandelion, rosemary-infused herbal aid to digestion that doubles as a salad dressing?

To Make an Oil the Simpler's Way

1. Select your oil. For medicinal purposes it is traditional to use extra virgin olive oil, but you may use any oil that suits your purposes.
2. Select a single herb or herbal combination. You may use dried or fresh. If you use fresh you will want to let it wilt a bit to reduce water content. If you are using fresh you will also want to chop it up well.
3. Fill a jar about two thirds full of fresh herb and slightly less than that of dried herb.
4. Pour the oil over your herb, ensuring that there are at least one to two inches of liquid over the herbs.
5. Secure the lid and label with the date, type of medium and herb.
6. Place the jar in the sun, either outside or in a sunny window.
7. Shake the jar as often as you can, once a day would be perfect. This not only ensures proper infusion but it potentizes your medicine with your personal intentions for its use.

8. Allow the oil to steep for four to six weeks. The folkloric way is to start your oil on the new moon and strain it at the following new or full moon depending on how long you steep it.
9. Strain the herb or herbal combination out of the oil. This should be done through fine cheesecloth or strainer. Be sure to squeeze the plant material well to remove all the goodness that is soaked into it.
10. Bottle in amber glass bottles, label and use or store somewhere cool and out of direct sunlight.

Teas

Teas are the classic way to get your herbs; they are made with two basic methods. An *infusion* is a gentle steeping of herb in hot water, usually covered, for 10–20 minutes. It is called for when you are using leaves, fruits or aromatic seeds. A *decoction* is a stronger brew and involves bringing your herb and water to boil together and then simmering on low, covered, for 10–20 minutes. It is used when your tea is made up of bark, roots, nuts and non-aromatic seeds. There are some exceptions to the rule, so be sure to verify each herb's preparation method prior to making your tea. If you are using high quality herbs you may use your "tea leaves" at least two and sometimes three times before composting them.

Electuaries and Candies

Honey and maple syrup can be used alone or with foods such as dried herbs, peanut butter or cocoa to make candy to deliver herbal medicine. Honey is actually known in the ayurvedic tradition to deliver herbs to deeper tissue than they could reach alone. Always use the highest quality, organic and raw ingredients when making electuaries and herbal candies. If you are heating your ingredients to make candy, it is important to use something other than honey. Honey should never be heated beyond the level it might get to when added to a warm cup of tea to maintain its healthful properties.

Neti Pots

Neti pots have recently received much attention, both good and bad, in the media. The benefits of this tool can only be achieved with proper use and understanding. Neti pots should never be used during an active bout of

congestion or infection; the water tends to get “stuck” and becomes a perfect medium for continued bacterial growth. Using water that is not distilled may also create potential problems. Many use the neti pot properly for routine maintenance and prevention of accumulation of airborne allergens. With the help of the right herb and a saline solution, the neti pot can deliver an herbal tea wash for extreme dryness, nosebleeds, immunity and much more.

The neti pot can be a valuable home health care tool if you know how to use it.

Steams

I just don’t know anyone who doesn’t have a sinus issue. It’s common because of poor diet choices, even if you don’t have a cold. In the instance of stubborn congestion, especially when it is causing headaches or sinus infection, a steam is just the thing. Start with a bowl and add boiling water. You may start out with a handful of household herbs (an easy idea may include garden sage (*Salvia officinalis*)or bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)) or you can simply use two-three drops of a couple of different essential oils (great ideas: peppermint, lavender, eucalyptus). As soon as the steaming water and herbs are in the bowl, pull a large bath towel over your head to cover both you and the bowl. You are creating a tent so that the steam cannot escape. Put your face as close to the surface of the water as you can

stand, and remain there for at least eight minutes. Keep a box of tissues handy!

Herbal steams can provide a wide range of benefits for many health issues.

Shower Steam for Infants and Toddlers

From time to time you might need to deal with a young child who is struggling with congestion who would not or cannot sit over a bowl for a steam. Head to a small bathroom in your home and close the door. You will want a spritzer bottle with a mixture of water and appropriate essential oils. Alternatively, you may hang a bunch of aromatic herbs from the shower head. If you have an infant, you may play or nurse, or they may be allowed to fall asleep. If you have a toddler, take in some toys and have playtime. Get the shower running hot until steam begins to fill the room. Spritz the essential oils into the air and try to stay in the bathroom for at least eight minutes of good steaming.

Vaginal, Prostate or Rectal Steam

The steam principle can be harnessed for healing more intimate areas as well. This can be as easy as adding a toilet seat to a five-gallon bucket. Sit on the seat with a blanket around your shoulders, draped to create a tent covering you and the bucket. This preparation can be used for postpartum

recovery, swollen prostate, yeast infections in both men and women, hemorrhoids or simple monthly health maintenance for cycling women.

Facial Steam

This application targets the skin so the herbs are a little different. Here you want herbs for astringency, soothing and/or healing. You can make a preparation for general skin maintenance or for problems such as acne, rashes, even rosacea. If you have rosacea or otherwise sensitive skin, it is important to keep your face further away from the steam and make the steam less intense.

Sick Room Potpourri

Combinations of fresh or dried herbs can be placed in a sick room. They should be chosen for their antibacterial or volatile oil content mainly. Sage is always a good choice. These herbs may be enhanced by a drop or two of essential oil, or they may be placed in a burner or in water over a candle warmer to fill the air with their benefits.

Baths

Full Body

Never forget that the skin eats what you soak in or put on. Baths are a great way to get herbs into someone who is not able to keep down food or who is greatly debilitated. They are also specifically helpful for issues involving an overstressed nervous system.

Use a muslin bag to hold the herbs so you don’t have to clean up an herbal tub ring. You’re now floating around in a big cup of tea basically. This is especially great for fever, headache and some rashes (never poison ivy or oak!).

Foot and Hand

These are perfect to pull inflammation out of the head when someone has any kind of headache. Use any herbs you have on hand and water as hot as can be tolerated.

Sitz

This bath is a time-tested therapy for recovery from birth (trauma to perineum) or hemorrhoids. Alternate between hot and cold for best effect. This alone is helpful, but when you add healing herbs (for example, comfrey (*Symphytum* spp.) and calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) to the water and make a tea for this bath, you heal on a whole new level.

Eye Wash

Some herbs are used to heal the eyes for everything from conjunctivitis to glaucoma. Make a strong tea. but use it only once and discard. You never want to use old tea in the eyes. There are specially made eye cups if you can track one down, but otherwise you can lean over a sink and pour the tea over the open eye, starting in the inner corner and allowing it to wash to the outer corner. This is also a great way to remove a foreign object from the eye.

Douche

A strong herbal tea can be helpful to use as a douche when you have a vaginal issue that would benefit from a flush and topical application of specific herbs. Do be careful with a douche; use sparingly. It is easy to upset the delicate pH balance of the vagina and difficult to put it right again.

Poultices

A poultice can be as simple as applying a leaf of yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) to stop the bleeding on a knee. You will usually want to crush the plant a bit before applying. Poultices are great if the skin isn’t overly sensitive, or if it’s all you have. You may apply this cold or hot (heat draws, cold constricts), and you can use fresh or dried herbs. If you are using dried herbs it is a good idea to soak them a bit so they are softer before applying. You may use either water or oil for soaking. Be aware that when you apply some herbs (such as ginger or mustard) they can be too harsh directly against the skin. Here is where your stockpile of cotton or terry cloth rags comes in handy. Put a cloth between the herbs and the skin to protect from burns.

Plaster

This is a specific type of poultice that is often done with powdered herbs. The storied mustard or ginger plaster is applied between the shoulder blades and to the chest to release congestion. Be aware that these plasters can get powerfully hot, especially for sensitive skin, and can burn the skin if you are not careful. It can be very helpful to cut such herbal powder with flour to make it less abrasive.

Compresses

Keep plenty of old t-shirt and towel material around for use in compresses. You will be making teas of herbs and soaking the cloth before holding it on a wound, infection or inflammation. There are many reasons to use a compress. It is the right choice especially in situations where the skin is particularly sensitive. Remember that a lot of the herbs you may use are also dye plants — you will definitely stain any cloth you use for a compress. Hot or cold depends on what issue you are treating. Always remember heat draws and cold constricts.

Soups, Stews and Bone Broth

In our house, winter is the time for hearty soups and stews. These are another great opportunity to eat your medicine! For a soup or stew you may want to formulate a combination of beneficial herbs — maybe you just want to boost household immunity so you combine elder flower (*Sambucus canadensis*) and astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*). I generally put all these herbs together in a muslin bag and drop it into the soup as it cooks. You will want to add delicate herbs like leaves and flowers late in the cooking process, whereas you will add roots and barks early on to allow their phytochemicals to be released. Before you serve your soup, simply remove the muslin bag and squeeze it out.

Bone Broth

When I am helping someone rebalance from an illness, I often recommend they make use of bone broths. Bone broths are much more than soup stock; the addition of an acid during the brewing period impregnates the resulting

liquid with gelatin, calcium, magnesium and other important nutrients. Instead of making an herbal tea AND a cup of bone broth, I find it to be more efficient to use the bone broth itself as a tea. The same timing considerations would apply: add roots and barks earlier and leaves and flowers later. This time you may add these herbs directly into the water as you will be straining everything out in the end anyway.

Don't throw away the bones! They can be cooked to create a hardy broth packed with vitamins and minerals.

For every quart of water you add to your bones you can generally expect to add one quarter cup of apple cider vinegar, wine, kombucha or citrus juice.

A Traditional Foods Pantry

When you begin to treat illnesses at home, one of the most surprising things will be the moment when you realize that half of your medical supplies are in your medicine cabinet and the other half is in your kitchen. If many of your "treatments" are food, you are doing something right.

The kitchen pantry should provide whole food support for your herbal medicine options. Ours focuses on ingredients *— not prepared foods.*

In general, the diet that should be followed for general health involves whole foods, traditionally prepared. My definition of whole foods is food as close to the form it came out of the ground or off the animal as possible. There isn't one right way to eat for everyone. Part of the lifetime project of getting to know ourselves is to understand what foods work the best in each individual body. My recommendations for most people are as follows:

- If you eat meat, focus on grass-fed, chemical-free or organic. Be sure to eat the organ meats, fat and broth from the bones. These parts of the animal are wastefully thrown away time and time again while we starve for the nutrition that they contain. If you want to be healthier, honor the sacrifice of the animal that builds your body and use all of its parts.
- If you eat dairy, stick with grass-fed, chemical-free and raw. Dairy should be full-fat, always. If you can't get raw then find an organic milk producer who pasteurizes at the lowest setting and does not homogenize. If you can't find that, avoid dairy except for fermented products such as kefir or yogurt in small amounts.
- You absolutely must have good fats in your diet. These entail fats from grass-fed animals (lard, tallow, butter, ghee), coconut oil, olive oil that is

not heated and nut-based oils that are kept refrigerated.

- Soak, sprout or sour as much as you can of your nuts, grains and seeds. Unless grains are prepared properly, they still contain all the protective mechanisms designed to ensure survival for the seed (see sidebar).
- Avoid fat-free, sugar-free, genetically modified foods and oils, hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup and anything on a label that is not a recognizable food.
- Avoid soy that has not been fermented. It is estrogenic and highly inflammatory to say the least.
- Minimize caffeine and alcohol. Use them sparingly, and they shouldn't be a problem.

More on Soaking and Sprouting

Each seed that drops from a plant is wrapped in a seed coat that protects the seed from germinating at the wrong time (such as the dead of winter) and dying. The seed coat only dissolves when conditions are right for germination, usually when the weather is warm and wet. These protective mechanisms (often called anti-nutrients) within the seed coat include phytic acids, enzyme inhibitors and proteins (gluten and others) in their whole, and hard to digest, state. By preparing our grains properly the difficult parts of the grain can be neutralized and predigested to protect us from inflammation, irritation and nutrient loss.

Most traditional cultures soaked, sprouted or soured their grains. Elimination of this important step in cooking is resulting in rampant levels of digestive disorders and other degenerative diseases in contemporary societies. The USDA food plate suggests that the American eater should focus on whole grains as a healthy choice. Unfortunately, without education on how to prepare these grains properly, this advice causes more harm than good. Increasingly, people are choosing a completely grain-free diet instead.

Properly made ferments like kraut can be made at home and should be included in each meal for better health.

A pinch of fermented foods should be added to every meal. These living foods keep our gut properly populated with good bacteria. It is easy to learn to ferment foods such as sauerkraut or pickles at home. If you need to buy them instead, look for ferments that do not contain vinegar. Vinegar is the mark of a ferment that has been made by way of shortcuts, and it will not contain the living bacteria that you need.

Superfood Supplements

The following superfoods should be part of your herbal medicine cabinet and eaten regularly to maintain health:

•Spirulina
•Raw Honey
•Fermented Cod Liver Oil
•Fermented Foods (see sidebar)

Seasoning Blends

Do you tend to have salt and pepper at the table? Why not jazz it up and get more health benefits? With a coffee grinder and a few herbs you would like your family to eat, you can create your own seasoning blend. When you get everything ground to a shakable consistency, you may choose to add sea salt or not. A seasoning blend is a simple way to get additional vitamins and minerals in a form that's useful for your body.

Casseroles

Steaming some of your fresh herbal greens (you may refer to them as weeds) and adding them to a quiche or your favorite dinner casserole is a great way to take advantage of everything plants have to offer us without making a "medicine" that your family has to "take."

Direct Consumption and Salads

Grazing is one of my favorite ways to get my herbs. While you are weeding in the garden, snacks can be found everywhere for you and your kids if you teach them what they can eat. While you're at it, collect some extra greens (like dandelion, shepherd's purse and chickweed) and bring them inside for a salad at lunchtime!

A trip through the yard should help augment not only your meal, but your overall health.

Ointment, Salves and Balms

After you build up a store of herbal infused oils, this is the next step. By adding various amounts of beeswax (rule of thumb is a quarter cup per cup of oil if you are not adding any other wax or fat), cocoa butter, shea butter or other semisolid substance, you can control the weight of these preparations. Be careful to tailor each preparation to its specific purpose. For example, you would not want to apply a very hard salve to a burn. Instead you would add less beeswax to ensure a very soft, spreadable consistency.

Herb Jelly

You'll find recipes for these jellies in old-fashioned cookbooks. Often they are made with mint or lemon verbena. Why not branch out and spread a jelly that is formulated for a specific health issue onto morning toast? This is a creative way to make bitter herbs more tasty to resistant palates.

Flower Essences

Essences can be bought in dosage bottles or made on your own. Making a flower essence from your own garden on a summer afternoon with your children can be a very rewarding form of medicine. When the medicine needed is on an emotional or spiritual level, these essences are important to have on hand. Information on the therapeutic values of many native North American flowers can be found through the Flower Essence Society (FES).[1]

Flowers contain important energetics that can be harnessed to alleviate emotional health issues.

Essential Oil

Essential oils are the concentrated volatile oils present in a plant after the water content has been distilled out. This is a highly concentrated form of medicine and not likely one that you will make at home due to the sheer amount of plant material required. As I write this, it has become very popular to use essential oils as the main constituent of the natural home medicine cabinet. This is in part because it is trendy, but also because of the ease of use and small space needed to store them. All of that is true, but it is important to remember that this form of plant medicine is very powerful. It removes only one of the components of a plant, leaving many more behind. This, to me neglects the benefits that can be had in whole plant medicine. There is a place for essential oils in the home health cabinet, but I do not believe it should comprise the whole of it. These oils should be used with respect, and favor should be given to the plants in their whole form.

Hydrosols

Often called flower waters, hydrosols can be made of any plant part and are mild and greatly diffused forms of essential oils. The best quality hydrosols are made by steam distillation, but they can also be made by infusion. Hydrosols are valuable applied externally to dry skin or used internally in syrups, beverages or teas.

Syrup

Syrups are popular formulations, often mixed with honey for a soothing effect. Making your own gives you the ability to control what the syrup contains and target herbs specifically for your needs.

HOW TO MAKE A SYRUP

1. Select one herb or, for a very simple syrup formulation, choose a prepackaged herbal tea that you like.
2. For every quart of water you start with, add two ounces of herb or tea mix.
3. Over low heat, simmer your water and herb mix down by half its original volume
4. Strain out the herbs and then return the liquid to the pot.
5. For every two cups of herbal infusion you've made add one cup of sweetener (if you intend to keep this in the refrigerator) or two cups of sweetener (if you want it to be shelf stable).
6. If you would like to use raw honey, warm the mixture gently until combined. This will make your end result more liquid than traditional syrups. If you would like to use something else, like maple syrup, you should simmer your syrup for about 20 minutes to thicken it.
7. Remove the syrup from heat and add anything extra that you would like. Now is the time for a splash of alcohol (for preservative) or essential oil.
8. Bottle your syrup in amber bottles, label and store. This should last a few weeks to months depending on how you have prepared it.

With recent revelations about the dangers of conventional cough syrups, making your own seems like a much better option.

Small Beer and Liquors

Once upon a time, alcohol was created by fermenting herbs so that beers were healing tonics. If you are a home brewer, experiment with the different herbal flavors and benefits you can get when you use other ingredients beyond barley.

Lotions and Creams

Don’t just use a boring oil base to make your own cream! Infuse it with your favorite healing herb to create a power-packed preparation that soothes and moisturizes while solving a targeted skin issue.

Liniment

Soaking an herb for a time in rubbing alcohol or vinegar in the same way you would prepare a tincture can yield a preparation that is only intended for external use. Liniments are typically used for sore muscles and arthritic pains.

Capsules, Pills, Suppositories and Boluses

Herbal medicine does not have to be so different than the over-the-counter preparations you're used to. Why not make your own quick-acting capsules for things like headaches and colds? Of course, you may buy these preparations, but do buy good quality. Powdered herbs become oxidized faster than herbs that are intact. If you cannot determine the age or origin of your herbs, you may not see the effect that you would like.

- Capsules. These start with a pre-formed gelatin cap that you fill with ground herbs. You can use a capsule machine to save yourself assembly time.
- Pills. Finely powdered herbs can be rolled with honey or maple syrup and then dried (for shelf stability) or stored in the refrigerator.
- Suppositories and Boluses. When herbs are combined with a semisolid oil like coconut oil they can be used for rectal or vaginal insertion for issues like hemorrhoids or yeast infection.

You can easily create your own capsules with fresher, more potent herbs by purchasing your own capsule maker.

Powders

Powdered herbs can be used when a skin issue requires drying to heal. You may choose to combine your chosen powders with arrowroot or cornstarch.

Lozenge

Making your own hard candy lozenges with sugar and concentrated herbal teas is the perfect way to sooth a sore throat or give a candy treat to a resistant child or adult. You can also make lozenges without heat by mixing herbal powders and a liquid together. These sweets can then be dried and used in much the same way as the candy kind made with high heat.

Succus

Simply crushing a plant until it is juicy can make an amazing medicine. Often applied externally, a common succus is made from jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) to prevent the oils of poison ivy from attaching to the skin.

Enema

Enemas are old-fashioned medicine and they are useful when you are treating someone who is too debilitated to ingest an herbal preparation. The large intestine and colon are designed to absorb water and pass it back into the body. This is an ideal location, therefore, to deliver healing herbs that otherwise might not be absorbed in a debilitated person or in one whose digestion is compromised.

For more detailed instruction on how to make herbal medicines I highly recommend *The Herbal Medicine-Maker's Handbook* by James Green.[2]

Harvesting and Drying Herbs

Obtaining your own high quality herbs begins with proper harvesting at the herb's medicinal peak. We pick our roses in the morning as the dew is drying. Harvesting at this time of day, before the bees come to visit, captures the most oils in the petals and ensures great color.

PHOTO CREDITS: CARSON COMBS

The key to proper drying is constant heat (90–110°F) and airflow. While we have our own extensive drying system, many standard kitchen ovens have special drying cycles. Dehydration units can also be used, or you can use the traditional method of hanging your herbs in bunches.

After your herbs have dried, keep them as intact as possible. In a small operation, leaves can be carefully removed from the stems by hand. For faster processing they can be gently rubbed across a screen. Your herbs should be stored in a cool, dark place to maintain their vibrant color and smell.

Herbal Tea Basics

Making your own herbal tea at home is not just as easy as throwing a tea bag into some hot water. To obtain the most medicinal benefit from your herbs, there are two methods that should be considered depending on the part of the plant that is being brewed.

MOCKINGBIRD MEADOWS
SWALLOWED EMOTIONS TEA
LOOSE LEAF • 2 OZ
Directions:
Formulated to alleviate the stress of pent-up emotions and unsaid words. Use 2-3 tsp. per cup or 3-4 Tbsp. per quart. Covered and steep for 10-15 minutes. Strain and drink as needed.

#1: Brewing an Infusion — When using leaves, fruits, flowers, roots that are high in volatile oils or aromatic seeds, heat a tea kettle and pour hot water over the herbs. Cover and let steep for at least 10–20 minutes. On the farm, we use a mason jar and brew teas by the quart for simplicity. Strain and drink or store in the refrigerator for one to two days.

#2 : Brewing a Decoction — The components of roots, bark, nuts and non-aromatic seeds are harder to dissolve in liquid. For this tea bring your herbs and water to a boil and simmer in a covered pan for 10–20 minutes. I will often let it steep covered without heat for another 10 minutes (especially if I'm adding in some herbs that need to be infused) and then strain. A decoction of fresh ginger with some raw honey, lemon juice and whiskey is one of our favorite remedies during cold and flu season.

Infusing Oils

The easiest and most natural way to infuse herbs into an oil is to use the energy of the sun and moon. Put fresh, but slightly wilted, herbs into a jar. Fill the jar two thirds full with herbs and pour oil one to two inches over the herbs. Place the jar in the sun and shake daily. After four-six weeks, your oil can be strained and is ready to use.

In a pinch when you don't have weeks for the sun to work, the stove top method is the fastest way to create an oil infused with herbs. Using a double boiler, fill the insert pan about two thirds full of herbs and add oil at least one to two inches over the herbs. Heat the water below to boiling, then turn down the heat. Simmer for 20 to 40 minutes, keeping the pan covered. Cool and strain.

Herbal Compresses

PHOTO CREDITS: CARSON COMBS

Compresses are very similar to poultices, but instead of the herb itself you use an oil or a tea to do the work. I often recommend a castor oil pack on the abdomen, so that is what you see being done in the picture. We are using the Compoult pad which we've designed to make this process a bit cleaner, but you may use any type of soft rag you have around the house. Make a tea and allow it to cool so that it doesn't burn, or heat your oil in a shallow pan in the oven. Soak your compress material and place it on the area you'd like to address.

Top off your compress and plastic combo with a heating pad or hot water bottle. Now relax, watch television, read or take a nap. You should keep this compress on for at least half an hour, but if it stays on longer it's even better.

Cover your compress with a sheet of plastic wrap. This helps to contain the mess if you're using rags; wraps also keep in the heat.

Making Balms and Salves

To make a salve, start with an oil that has the proper herbs infused for the type of home remedy you're creating. Olive and coconut oils are our favorite choices. Once you have your infused base oil, you're ready to begin.

PHOTO CREDITS: CARSON COMBS

Beeswax is added to an infused and strained oil to create a salve. Notice the difference between the base oil (right) and one combined with beeswax (left). Add approximately one quarter cup beeswax to every cup of oil and place in the oven to melt together. This is also the time to add any other goodies such as lanolin or vitamin E. 140°F is a good temperature to use. Just remember that beeswax is flammable, and you are only looking to melt the salve, not cook it. Once the mix is melted and stirred evenly, you're ready to pour.

You should always test the consistency of your salve before pouring it. Dip in a spoon and pop it in the refrigerator for a minute. A good mix will be soft and pliable to the touch (image on left). This is the time to add more oil or beeswax if the consistency needs to be adjusted. Once your batch is ready, you can pour or spoon it into individual containers. Add desired essential oils quickly and allow the salve to cool and set up.

Pill Making

PHOTO CREDITS: CARSON COMBS

Making your own pill preparations can be quite simple if you know how. This is how you would make the headache pills in the medicine chest section of this book. Start with finely powdered herbs and add raw honey and some water until it reaches a bread dough-like consistency.

Once your pill dough is mixed, roll it out into a rope about the thickness of a night crawler. Using a knife, cut the rope into small segments. The pieces can then be rolled in your hand into pea-sized pills.

The rolled pills should be coated to keep from sticking together. Cocoa powder is our favorite. Pills can be dried, but our household finds them hard to swallow. Our preferred method is to place freshly made pills in a sealed container. They'll keep in the refrigerator for months.

Note: *To view videos of these processes and more medicine-making, see our YouTube Channel: Mockingbird Meadows.*

Poultice Basics

PHOTO CREDITS: RACHEL BRUGGER

Poultices are easy enough to make that even a child can learn. Poultices may be made with either fresh or dried herbs. For a simple fresh poultice, start by chewing up or macerating the herb. Our children gather a plantain leaf anytime they're stung by a bee while playing in the yard.

Once chewed, you can apply the herb to the area needing treatment. Hold the herb on the wound or cover with a bandage to hold the poultice in place.

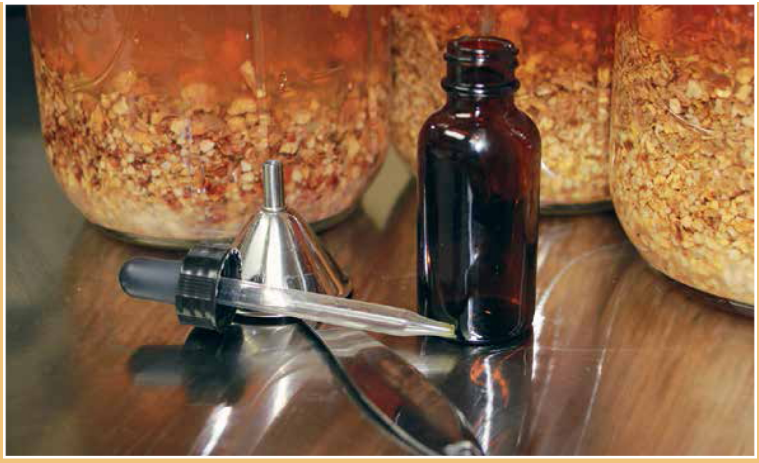
In the case of plantain, you can immediately feel it drawing out the toxin. Continue to hold the macerated herb in place and reapply with new herb material until the pain and swelling are gone.

Tinctures (Extracts)

To make a simple tincture, fill a glass jar almost two thirds full with dried herbs and cover this completely with alcohol, vegetable glycerine or apple cider vinegar. For alcohol, use at least 80 proof brandy or vodka. Warm apple cider vinegar in the oven before pouring over the herbs. Tinctures should steep for four to six weeks. On the farm, we optimally start our tinctures on the new moon and shake them daily through the next new moon and to the following full moon.

PHOTO CREDITS: CARSON COMBS

Once the tincture is ready, we pour it into a strainer to filter out the herb. Use a fine mesh strainer or one lined with cheesecloth and capture the liquid in a bowl or pitcher. Make sure you squeeze out the herbs in the strainer to get the most potency.



After straining, bottle your tincture. For best results, place in an amber bottle and store in a dark, cool closet away from sunlight. Optimally, you should use your tinctures within one or two years. It is possible to keep them longer; just run them through a quick quality check (smell, taste, effect) if it's been longer. We've had tinctures in our medicine closet that we're still using effectively after seven years.

Chapter 8:

What's in the Cupboard?

THE MEDICINE CABINET IN OUR BATHROOM occasionally holds remedies that we are using at the time, but most people who open that door will see homemade toothpaste and a bar of soap instead of pills and ointments. To peep at our medicine collection, a visitor must open the hall linen closet instead. It is only here that I have the room necessary for both my medicines as well as my tools.

The natural medicine cupboard is incredibly different in scope than its modern equivalent for a few very important reasons. First, a natural medicine cabinet is not static. For a couple of years, ours contained a large number of pregnancy and birth related remedies. That time of life has moved on, and we see changes as little ones progress from infant rashes to scraped knees. The natural home medicine cabinet is as fluid as the family it represents. It is personalized to the pathology found in the home.

Some families may not need all the things our family finds useful. Those families may have more digestive issues or more respiratory issues. Peeping in the natural medicine cabinet really does tell you a lot about the family that lives in the home. Personalization does not always mean in the way of need. Sometimes it is preference that determines personalization. If you live in a household where no one will drink tea, it is hardly useful to stock your medicine cupboard with a full line of first aid teas. Not only is medicine selection and variability individual, but the method of application is as well. Someone who can't seem to swallow pills will need more syrups, teas and foodways. The family who likes everything encapsulated will want to lay in a supply of herbal powders and empty capsules.

Check Your Cupboard Regularly

Every year you should go through your cupboard, compost those things that are no longer viable and replace them. It is a great idea to periodically assess what's going on on these shelves. Clean them up. Do you have an abundance of digestive tonics? What's going on there? Does someone need more in-depth help? Would they benefit from seeing an experienced practitioner? Keep your medicine cupboard clutter free so that you can easily find what you need in an emergency.

You need more room in a natural medicine cabinet because there are simply more therapies to be applied. When we got away from taking responsibility for our own health in the home, we were sold a bill of goods that these therapies were dangerous to undertake. It would now be seen as ludicrous, perhaps even irresponsible, to perform an enema at home. That is reserved for the medical specialist, and sometimes the salon practitioner, if it is an option at all. Nevertheless, the home health care practitioner will need to know how to use poultices, compresses, enemas and more if they are truly going to understand how to apply herbs properly. My medicine cupboard contents that follow reflect everything you would need to treat all the ailments in this book using the herbs in the apothecary available.

A Natural Medicine Cabinet

A. Instruction Manual

Always remember that you may not always be the person treating the ailment or emergency. It is critical that you provide a good enough instruction manual that even the novice may find what they are looking for in your cupboard. If you keep this manual on the shelves with your tinctures and pills, you might also want to add a map or inventory of what someone may expect to find.

B. Labels

Always, always, always label your medicines. Here are the important bits of information:

1. Ingredients
2. Title
3. Reason it may be used, e.g. "For Diarrhea"
4. How to use it, e.g. "2–3 drops under the tongue every 15–20 minutes"
5. Instructions on how to make it if it is not ready to use, e.g. "Pour boiling water over tea, cover and steep 15 minutes, strain and serve."
6. Date the medicine was made. Natural medicine often has a shelf life. Sixteen-year-old sage may not provide the benefit you were hoping. If you have jars of herbs in the cupboard, make sure you know when they were harvested. If you've blended a tea or started a tincture, note the dates.

C. Tools

1.Apple cider vinegar
2.Antiseptic spray — sage, plantain, calendula and honey in vodka
3.Green clay
4.Lavender essential oil
5.Peppermint essential oil
6.Eucalyptus essential oil
7.Yarrow flower essence
8.Liquid chlorophyll (e.g. ChlorOxygen®)
9.Castor oil
10.Enema bag
11.Cotton/flannel strips for compresses and poultices
12.Pre-chilled headache washcloths
13.Heating pad
14.Ice pack
15.Bread flour
16.Rescue Remedy®
17.Homeopathic Arnica pills
18.Raw honey
19.Small tub for foot and hand baths

D. Powdered Herbs

1.Cayenne
2.Comfrey
3.Yarrow
4.Ginger

E. Dried Herbs

1.Hops
2.Yarrow
3.Wild Bergamot
4.Sage

F. Tinctures

1.Fever — boneset
2.Infection — one part plantain, two parts boneset, one part ginger
3.Diarrhea — one part plantain, one part sage, one part mullein, one half part ginger
4.Muscle Relaxant — two part hops, one part calendula, one quarter part lobelia
5.Headache/pain — two parts St. John’s wort, one part hops, one half part ginger
6.Urinary Tract Infection — one part parsley, one part bee balm, one part plantain
7.Respiratory Emergency/Emetic/Hiccups — lobelia
8.Bitters — three parts hops, one part boneset, two parts lemon balm, one part sage, one part ginger

G. Teas

1.Colds/Congestion — one part plantain, one part ginger, one part boneset, one eighth part lobelia, two parts mullein

2.Headache — three parts lemon balm, one part hops, one part calendula, one half part ginger
3.Sore Throat — one part plantain, one part sage, one part mullein

H. Capsules/Pills

1.Headache — two parts lemon balm, three parts hops, one part calendula, one half part ginger

I. Salves/Balms

1.All-Purpose (bites, bruises, wounds, burns) — Equal parts calendula, echinacea, plantain, comfrey infused in cold pressed extra virgin olive oil.
2.Vapor Balm — one part yarrow, one half part cayenne, one part comfrey infused in cold pressed extra virgin olive oil. To each cup of oil add two tablespoons of menthol crystals.

J. Oils

1.Mullein/garlic ear oil
2.Calendula oil
3.St. John's wort oil
4.Chickweed oil

Your tools of the trade do not need to be extensive and complicated — but they will look much different than the conventional medicine cabinet full of pills and prescriptions.

Antiseptic Spray

one part sage
one part plantain
one part calendula

Tincture the herbs in vodka for four to six weeks. Strain and to every cup of tincture add one tablespoon of raw honey. To use, pour into a two-ounce spray bottle or simply apply with cotton balls. This antiseptic spray will remain shelf stable for years.

Chapter 9:

Working with Your Doctor

WHEN WE STARTED OUR FAMILY, it was my job to go looking for a family doctor. I am not an easy patient for many practices. I started by asking friends for recommendations and then lining up appointments with likely candidates. These were not appointments for examinations; instead I let each of the offices know that I was coming in to interview the doctor to see if they were a right fit for my family. Unfortunately, to some people this may seem like the height of arrogance. In fact, there were a couple of offices that would not allow me to schedule this kind of time with their doctors. This easily reduced the field for me.

Many people choose their doctors today by whom their insurance company will pay. How is it that we can't see how wrong that is? A doctor is not just a service provider. They aren't taking away our garbage or plugging in our Internet. They are tasked with the very important job of helping to maintain our family's health. In some instances they can be all that stands between life and death.

For us, it was very important to pick the physician that was the right fit for our family. When I sat down with each doctor, I explained how I expected to use their services. My husband and I make all the health decisions for our family. This means that we do our homework, we know our bodies and we consult with multiple advisors before we make a decision on a course of action. In many cases, we manage illnesses and emergencies at home. In some cases, I am likely to ask my doctor for their advice and after mulling over my options go with a different plan. I believe that the doctor should also have the right to decide if I am a right fit for him or her. The doctor that I eventually chose for my family was fine with how I

managed our home care. She was confident in her abilities and her knowledge and was strong in her convictions but was willing to allow us to make our own decisions. We were a match.

It is important to interview your doctors before enrolling as their patient. It is only fair that they know up front that you will be using them as part of your health care team. You may not always take their advice, and you may be treating a fair amount of things on your own at home. I highly recommend that you find someone who is willing to respectfully fight for their point of view even as they accept that you will make your own choice. You will not be well served by someone who just lets you "have your way" all the time. Our physicians must feel that they are a respected part of a relationship. They might have valuable information that you had not considered or heard in your research to date that might sway your opinion. It is important that you are willing to be wrong as much as they are willing to watch you go against their advice.

If you find a physician that is willing to take you on as a patient, follow their wellness visit policies to the letter. It is not fair to be missing in action for three years and come out of nowhere with a family member who is now critically ill. When it's clear you need professional help on something you have treated at home, your doctor should have a baseline understanding of your family already. Allow your doctor to see you at least once a year as a family to maintain a relationship and keep records of what a healthy baseline is on each of you.

When you begin working on an illness at home, call in if your doctor will allow that to let someone know what you are experiencing and what you are doing. This can be put into your file. The doctor can then be advised ahead of time and not be caught flat-footed if you have an emergency. Some doctors have phone hours each day for this purpose. Be considerate and only call with succinct information; don't ramble to the doctor or to their staff.

The cultivation of a strong relationship of mutual respect is important especially if you are going to work naturally on a long-term health issue with your doctor. They are not your boss. There really should be no room in the language of doctor and patient for "he/she won't allow me." Your doctor does not give you permission to make your own health decisions; you must take that responsibility on yourself. I hear this issue come up often with my

clients when they would like to transition away from medication. “My doctor won’t let me go off my blood pressure medication.” In a relationship of mutual respect, your doctor should understand your reasons for reducing your dependence on pharmaceuticals. There may be very valid reasons why a cold turkey approach isn’t safe. Your doctor may have concerns about your ability to follow through with any lifestyle changes that are necessary. They will most certainly have doubts about your commitment to yourself if you don’t take responsibility for your actions and expect them to do all the thinking in the first place. If you have been that patient in the past but are trying to change, be firm and be patient. If your current doctor simply won’t create a plan that helps you achieve your health goals, start the interview process for a replacement.

There are ways to transition the body off of pharmaceuticals in most every instance. You will be most successful by creating a plan with an MD who knows the effects and dangers of the medication. As an herbalist, I have supported a number of clients in their transition away from the merry-go-round of allopathic medication. It is almost never a good idea to go cold turkey. In any plan, you will want to support the body’s overall health first.

Here’s an example:

> Let’s say Leah wants to stop using her sleep medication. She feels she is becoming dependent, and she’s been noticing side effects lately. She just doesn’t feel right always using a pill and wants to heal her body naturally.
>
> The first thing I would do is to tell Leah to consider keeping up with her medication. She might talk with her doctor about what she would like to do and come up with a plan on how to move through a series of lower doses until she is off completely. That plan with her doctor should involve metrics along the way so that her progress is quantifiable and possible side effects are monitored. This might be a periodic blood test to measure hormone or nutrient levels.
>
> In the meantime, Leah has come back to me for the next step. I would formulate a tea, tincture or capsule for Leah that supports the health of the nervous system. I may suggest an increase in protein and calcium sources in her daily diet, and I

might suggest she start eating bee pollen for the vitamin B that is so important for proper sleep. If Leah started out with a sleep problem, regardless of the other things that may trigger her sleeplessness, she is definitely going to benefit from nutritional support for her nervous system.

As she progresses in her work with her doctor, Leah notices that the change in diet and the tea she is drinking is helping her to feel less anxious. She is able to calm herself and relax better in the evening. In our work together we may identify that her adrenal glands were stressed at the very beginning of her troubles, so we add in some specific herbs for that part of her endocrine system. Leah's doctor is seeing no need for alarm, and she is down to a quarter the dose she started with. She is sleeping well most of the time and has a plan for continuing to improve the rest of the way. Leah's doctor has no objections to her plan to discontinue her sleep medication.

In a perfect world, all the health care providers on your team would be able to talk together about your case. That is not always possible, so you must be the quarterback. Advocating for yourself requires that you accept greater responsibility and keep better records, but in the end, isn't it worth it to experience your best health and to be independent?

Chapter 10:

How Much, How Often?

THE BEST WAY TO GET HERBS INTO YOUR BODY, in my opinion, is to use them daily in your food rather than "dosing" or worrying about "recommended daily allowance." We tend to limit our plant allies too much when we focus solely on their chemical makeup and how that applies to an arbitrary valuation of vitamins and minerals we should get on any given day. When we use tonic herbs in our food to maintain health there is no real worry about too much or too little; you are simply keeping a good level of phytonutrients flowing through your system.

When we need to turn to the more active herbs, usually we are treating a specific illness and then the amount we use in our body at any given time matters much more. For effectiveness, there are dosing suggestions for each herb we might use. There are also, occasionally, some concerns about overdoing it and causing an issue with toxicity. Remember, herbs must be used with respect rather than fear. If we trust that the herb holds phytochemicals capable of bringing about physical change, we must also be aware that those same phytochemicals have a threshold of safety. Many botanical preparations that can be bought at the store have directions for their use on the side of the box or bottle. They actually have to be there per US FDA rules, but is there such a thing as a one-size-fits-all dosing when it comes to herbs or herbal supplements?

The answer is simply, no. When you read the serving size on the side of a box, or a suggestion as to how much of any given herb to take, you can assume it is based on the average-sized (about 150 pounds) adult male. If you are giving the herb to an adult who differs from that size or gender, or to a child, you must adjust accordingly.

Learning to adjust dosages based on the type of issue is a reconnection to self, a knowing of your own body. You may use a different amount of an herb than the next person simply because you are trying to achieve something different. On our farm, we make a honey spread called Inflammabee. Our suggestion is to eat one teaspoon up to three times per day. My father is the person for whom I originally formulated this spread. For a while he ate one teaspoon a day just before bed, and it relieved the pain of his arthritic neck enough for him to sleep. His immediate problem was solved, but he admitted that the pain would return the next day. I explained to him that herbs can be used to relieve a temporary pain, or they can be used to help rebalance the body and stop a cycle of dysfunction. In order to break a cycle such as inflammation, it is necessary to eat three to four teaspoons spread evenly throughout the day. He grudgingly followed through with my suggestion, broke the pain cycle and now just uses the product for preventative measures during times of great activity.

Here are some guidelines for how to determine the different ways to use the herbs in this book.

Tonic/Daily Vitamin

If you are hoping to use an herb for general maintenance, like a daily multivitamin, you may take the suggested amount just once a day.

Chronic Health Issue

If you are struggling with an imbalance in your body that is causing health issues and it has been ongoing for quite some time, you will want to use your supplement more often. In that case you would eat an herb or herbal combination three to four times a day, and you would spread out the doses. An easy way to do this is to add the supplement into your breakfast, lunch and dinner routine. It is not helpful to just eat three times the herbal supplement at one time. Herbs don’t remain in the body for long periods of time. The body recognizes them as food and therefore uses them up and passes them through. You must eat more every few hours to keep up the concentration of the healing benefit. Over time, the herbs can help give your body the space it needs to heal itself.

Herbal Extracts (tinctures): ¼ teaspoon three to four times per day (or as directed)
Teas: one (eight ounce) cup three to four times per day
Pills (pea sized): three-four pills two to three times per day
Capsules (0) size: four capsules two to three times per day
Capsules (00 size): two capsules two to three times per day

Acute Health Issue

Herbs can help in acute situations as well, such as a headache. In this situation, you want to get the body to take up the herb's healthy benefits quickly. Ingesting small amounts in quick succession is the best way to use herbs for this type of relief.

Herbal extracts (tinctures): ⅛–¼ teaspoon every 15–20 minutes
Teas: ¼ cup every 15–20 minutes
Capsules and pills: Take as directed under chronic health issues

There are so many ways to add herbs to our lives. In a culture that focuses almost exclusively on the medicalization of health, though, it can be just as important to know how to add dandelion to a delicious soup as it is to understand the amount needed to help with the uncomfortable situation of bloating.

Part III:

The Herbs

NO MATTER WHICH HERBS YOU USE to fill your apothecary, be sure to experience them yourself before applying them to others. Reading about the herbs only gets us so far. Garden with them, taste them, bathe in them. When you understand these plants from all their various aspects, it is time to bring them into your home and enlist their help in keeping you healthy.

For each herb in our apothecary I share any special precautions (contraindications) that should be taken into account. Being aware of the contraindications surrounding an herb helps us to understand how best to use them safely. Please refer to the Glossary for definitions of words used to describe each herb's healing properties.

Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

■ Stimulant, diaphoretic, antimicrobial, antitumor

Harvest notes: This perennial is native where I live. Its leaves along with everything above ground are harvested in summer when the plant is in full bloom.

Boneset is a fairly common plant that is not widely used in today's herbal practices. I don't know why. It is a very potent antiviral, and when used as a hot tea it is also a diaphoretic.

There is some argument about whether or not this herb is useful for broken bones, but I am convinced that it is. It can be used to re-calcify teeth, ease bone pain and repair crushed and broken bones. It seems to do that by increasing the blood flow to the periosteum, the thin tissue surrounding our bones. It is also helpful for osteoporosis and osteomalacia. Complimentarily it seems that boneset also works on the joints and nerves that are part of the skeletal system. It can be used for multiple sclerosis and it has been shown to rebuild the myelin sheath.

Boneset is a valuable native medicinal distinctive for its unique leaf pattern that is arranged "through" the stem.

Boneset is heavily antibacterial and especially useful to our immune system addressing such issues as flu, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, yellow fever, *Staphylococcus aureus*, typhoid fever and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. It was one of the most successful herbs during the 1918 flu epidemic when nothing else worked. In the digestive system its action is due to its profound bitterness. It is good for acid reflux and indigestion.

Contraindications: It is not advisable to eat large amounts of boneset as it can act as an emetic or cathartic.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

- Anti-inflammatory, astringent, vulnerary, antifungal, cholagogue, emmenagogue

Harvest notes: Calendula is a self-seeding annual. Its flowers are harvested from early summer through fall.

Calendula is highly resinous and beneficial for a long list of ailments. Externally it can be used for bleeding, burns, sunburn, bruising, wounds, eczema, fungus, eye inflammations, stings, chicken pox, measles, frostbite, acne, diaper rash, heat rash, septic infections, scars, vaginal dryness and vaginal warts.

Slightly bitter, calendula is useful in the digestive system for the gall bladder, diseases involving excessive heat in the digestive organs, candida overgrowth, gum disease, stomach irritation, ulcers, hemorrhoids, mouth ulcers, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sluggish liver and high enzyme counts.

Calendula officinalis *not only makes a great medicinal, but looks wonderful in the garden.*

Calendula is an antispasmodic nervine. It is useful for viral hepatitis, neuralgia and cramping. In the respiratory system it can be used for bronchitis and asthma. It is particularly helpful in the lymphatic system, pushing out congestion and lingering infections, relieving swollen glands and stimulating the immune system.

Contraindications: Pregnant women should avoid high dosages in the first trimester.

Cayenne (*Capsicum anuum*)

■ Stimulant, carminative, tonic, antiseptic, rubefacient

Harvest notes: The ripe fruit of this plant is the part used. These peppers are easily recognizable. They are long, glossy and red. Both the flesh and the seeds carry the all-important capsaicin.

The activity of this herb is mainly felt in the digestive and the circulatory systems. As a stimulant and a tonic, it kicks our body into gear relieving such conditions as cold hands and feet, heart attack, stroke, fever, congestion, flu, gas and colic. We always include a pinch of cayenne in our sore throat gargle and as part of our cold formulations. Topically it is helpful for bleeding, muscle pain and varicose veins.

Contraindications: Active stomach ulcers or chronic irritable bowel.

We always grow cayenne peppers along with other varieties for salves and balms. Plant them as decorative landscaping if you don't have a large garden space.

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)

■ Vulnerary, emollient, pectoral, antirheumatic

Harvest notes: In my garden this self-seeding annual weed can be harvested from spring through fall, but it only stays fresh in evenly moist, shaded areas. Anything above the ground is fair game for food and medicine with this plant. Be certain of your identification. This is a creeper with a tiny white flower and a mohawk of hair in a line on one side of the stem. It is best to use this plant fresh as it is very delicate and degrades rather quickly.

Chickweed is the herbalist's favorite skin herb. It is important to make yourself enough oil to last the year while the plant is still fresh, to use for burns, boils, cellulite, rashes, eczema, wounds, lipoma and itchy skin. It is helpful for swollen testes in external applications and for mastitis, treating both internally and externally. Chickweed is a very effective drawing agent for pulling out infection and inflammation.

Stellaria media *provides a very tasty and useful, but delicate, ground cover.*

This tiny plant happens to be delicious. I love it in my salads for its abundance of vitamins B_6, B_{12}, C, D and beta-carotene. Chickweed can also be a great source of magnesium, iron, calcium, potassium, zinc, phosphorus, manganese, sodium, copper and silicon. It has application in the digestive system for improving fat metabolism, suppressing appetite, toning the gall bladder, colitis, diarrhea, constipation, hemorrhoids, peritonitis and indigestion.

Chickweed is especially useful for helping to break up blockages and waste that are the result of congestion. It is a lymphatic cleanser and helpful with hypothyroidism. In the circulatory system, as an alterative it can be useful for high cholesterol and arteriosclerosis. As a diuretic it excels, supporting the health of the kidneys and maintaining appropriate water balance in the body. In the respiratory system it can be used for bronchitis, cough, cold, pleurisy and asthma.

In the summer I keep an eye on my chickweed to determine my outdoor schedule. Folklore suggests that it can be used it to predict weather and I have found this to be true. When flowers fully open you can usually be assured that it won’t rain for at least four hours.

Contraindications: None known.

Comfrey (*Symphytum* spp.)

■ Vulnerary, demulcent, astringent, expectorant

Harvest notes: The leaf and root of this perennial herb can both be used. The root can be harvested either in spring before the leaves emerge or in the fall after the plant has died back below the ground. The leaf may be harvested just as the plant comes into bloom. You can usually get two or three cuttings each year.

There is some controversy over the use of comfrey internally. Many people continue to use it this way, but it is important to examine all the evidence before you decide what is right for you. Please refer to Appendix B for more information. In any case, I will share here its benefits both internally and externally.

Comfrey is known to contain vitamins B_1 and B_2, pantothenic acid, vitamins C and E, allantoin, iron, manganese, calcium, phosphorus and many more unidentified components. It is one of the best herbs topically for the skin and happens to contain one of the highest amounts of mucilage among analyzed herbs. Applied to the skin it is useful for bruising, broken bones, wounds, eczema, burns, abscesses, boils and psoriasis. It can be poulticed for carpal tunnel, arthritis, muscle spasms and bursitis.

Comfrey is an amazing skin-healing herb that grows well even in tough clay soils here in the US Midwest.

Internally it has been used in the musculo-skeletal system for strengthening the teeth, addressing gum disease, decreased bone density, loose joints and ligaments, severe spinal injury and healing bones that won't come together. In the respiratory system it also excels at relieving conditions such as bronchitis, congestion, allergies, hay fever, sinusitis, chronic cough, pleurisy, pneumonia, asthma and emphysema.

In the digestive system comfrey may address ulcer, colitis, inflammation and diarrhea. It has been used in the urinary tract for kidney stones and in the immune system for leukemias in children and abnormal white cell production in all bodies. In fact, to further complicate the matter, comfrey's problematic chemical components, pyrrolizidine alkaloids, have been shown to have anti-cancer properties.

The flower essence of comfrey is very interesting. It can be used for head injuries, coma, autism, epilepsy, insomnia and Alzheimer's. It appears to have a specific affinity to reaching those people who have walled themselves off somewhere inside due to a change in brain activity.

Contraindications: Comfrey should not be used internally by those who are struggling with veno-occlusive liver damage or any other liver disease. Comfrey is externally contraindicated for deep puncture wounds. It is believed by some that the pyrrolizidine alkaloids found in *S. officinale* and several other of the over 1,000 species worldwide may cause damage to the liver. If you are using native North American comfrey (*S.* × *uplandica*), it is unlikely that you are being exposed to this alkaloid. See Appendix B for more on the controversy over comfrey and herbs like it.

Echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*)

■ Antimicrobial, alterative

Harvest notes: All parts of the plant are useful, however it is the root that has primarily been used in folkloric applications. To that end, the leaf may be harvested just as the flower is developing. The flower may be harvested just as it is unfurling, and the root may be dug either in the spring or fall. Echinacea is a perennial that is in danger of overharvesting and loss of habitat, so source it responsibly or grow it yourself.

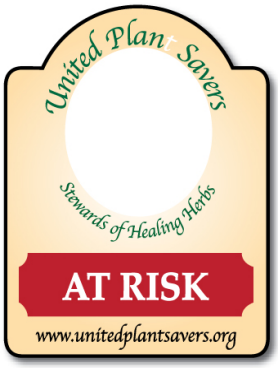
Echinacea is very useful for conditions that involve advanced infection or degeneration of tissues. It can be used where the system in general has been overtaxed with stress and overwork. It is not, contrary to popular belief, useful to take day in and day out as a preventative. The compounds within this plant marshal our white blood cells to move efficiently toward a place where our body is losing a battle with infection.

SCOTT WOOD /

As a prairie plant, echinacea has substantial medicinal benefit and provides forage for bees and butterflies.

It has been used most effectively as an internal application against toothache, fatigue, exhaustion, infection, sore throat, tonsillitis, bronchitis, flu, diphtheria, scarlet fever, strep throat, meningitis, the common cold, canker sores, gastric and duodenal ulcers, swollen lymphatics, septic conditions and gangrene. It can be used externally for boils, eczema, bee stings and snake bites.

Contraindications: It is speculated that echinacea may be detrimental to those with autoimmune diseases.



UNITED PLANT SAVERS

Echinacea is an "at risk" medicinal as designated by United Plant Savers.

Elder (*Sambucus canadensis*)

- Bark — purgative, emetic, diuretic
  Leaves — emollient, vulnerary, purgative, expectorant, diuretic, diaphoretic
  Flowers — diaphoretic, anti-catarrhal
  Berries — diaphoretic, diuretic, laxative

Harvest notes: The bark, leaves, flowers and berries can all be used medicinally. The leaves can be collected in an ongoing manner throughout the growing season. The flowers only appear for a short period in late spring and early summer and should be collected as soon as they open. The berries and the bark are both collected in the early fall: some time in August or September is the best. You'll know the berries are ready because it will get really hard to keep ahead of the birds.

Elder is an emblematic plant for the purpose of this book. It is truly a medicine cabinet all in itself, and you could care for much of your family's needs just with one large plant if you really needed to. Don't forget that the flower and the berries may be added to your food and don't necessarily need to be made into syrup, teas and tinctures to benefit your health.

The berries of the elder are great for winter colds, but pick fast before the birds win.

Externally, elder leaves can be used for burns, bruising, eczema, ulcers, ringworm, rashes, scabies, sprains, tight tendons and poison ivy and oak.

The berries are high in vitamins A, B and C. They are a great source of anthocyanins, bioflavonoids and amino acids. There is some concern about the berries being toxic. They are not. They should be considered a self-regulating emetic, as the compounds within them would cause you to vomit long before you could get enough of them to be toxic. They are also helpful for constipation.

In the respiratory system elder is helpful for the common cold, allergies, sinusitis, pneumonia, croup, congestion and edema of the lungs. Elder flower is a diaphoretic and is therefore very effective at relieving a fever that might come along with illness. In the urinary system elder is good for water retention and gout and in the reproductive system it has been used for fibroids. The berries can be used for a swollen spleen, vision problems, high cholesterol, heart health and anemia.

From an antimicrobial standpoint elder is effective against the flu (shown to be effective against eight different strains of influenza),[1] fever, mumps, measles, hepatitis B, dengue fever, polio and rotavirus. The berries are active against herpes, *Helicobacter pylori*, *Escherichia coli* and *Haemophilus influenzae*. The flowers are active against *Staphylococcus aureus,* and the bark is active against *Candida albicans.*

As of this writing there is concern that an outbreak of the Ebola virus will soon cause a problem in the world at large. Stephen Buhner notes that elder contains compounds within it that have been shown to be effective against Ebola.[2]

Contraindications: None known.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*)

- Antiseptic, antiviral, diaphoretic, cholagogue, hypotensive, antispasmodic

Harvest notes: The bulb is the most medicinal portion of this plant though you may use the scape (flower stalk) to similar but lesser effect. The bulb is dug when the leafy tops begin to wither. When the number of leaves that are still green get down to five, it's time to harvest.

Garlic is highly nutritious. It contains high levels of protein, beta-carotene, vitamins B_1, B_3 and C as well as the minerals calcium, potassium, magnesium, manganese, copper, zinc, iron, tin, germanium and selenium. Garlic's biological activity comes from the sulfur-containing amino acids allicin, allyl sulfide and allyl propyl disulfide. These are what make these plants stinky, but you can't smell them until you crush or cut and expose them to air. These compounds are also sensitive to heat, so to preserve the most benefit it is best to use garlic raw.

Garlic should be incorporated into your foods throughout the day for better general health.

Garlic has so much for us, starting with the circulatory system. It is useful for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arteriosclerosis, anemia, blood poisoning, increased circulation to the extremities and clot inhibition. In the respiratory system garlic also excels, addressing sore throat, cold, flu, cough, allergies, asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis, whooping cough, tonsillitis, pharyngitis, laryngitis, sneezing, shortness of breath and catarrh.

In the digestive system garlic is helpful for food poisoning, parasites, loose teeth, controlling blood sugar levels, tartar control, poor assimilation, poor appetite, diarrhea, weight loss, candida, gas, diverticulitis, constipation, bowel inflammation and fever.

Externally garlic is good for general infection, wounds, and infection and ringing in the ears. It can be applied to the skin for congestion in the chest, athlete’s foot, impetigo, psoriasis, boils, blisters, bedsores, bites, stings and dandruff. For the urinary and reproductive systems there are benefits for breaking up kidney stones, hot flashes and general male and female hormonal balance.

In the nervous system garlic can help with headache, dizziness, blurred vision, numbness and tingling in joints and extremities, fatigue and paralysis. In the musculo-skeletal system garlic is helpful with lumbago and arthritis.

Garlic also has shown activity against cancer cells. All of the alliums have the ability to remove toxic metals like lead, copper, cadmium and mercury from the body as well as the soil they grow in. All in all garlic is an easy preventative for degenerative disease.

Contraindications: Not recommended in high amounts just before surgery. May increase the effects of insulin and blood thinners.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

■ Stimulant, carminative, rubefacient, diaphoretic, anti-inflammatory

Harvest notes: The rhizome can be harvested at the end of the growing season when the leaves have dried. While ginger is strictly a tropical perennial, it can be grown as an annual in raised beds or in pots.

Ginger is the most widely used and available herbal remedy on the planet. In the digestive system it can be used for food poisoning, gas, colic, imbalanced appetite, increasing saliva and stomach acid, indigestion, heartburn, colic, diarrhea, digestive spasm, sluggish liver and peptic ulcer. A fresh tincture can regulate blood sugar and increase immunity.

In the respiratory system it is effective for cold, flu, upper respiratory infections, allergies, sore throat, congestion, pneumonia, bronchitis, cough, catarrh. The circulatory system benefits include reduced platelet aggregation, stroke and heart attack prevention, cholesterol, blood thinning and improving peripheral circulation. In the reproductive system ginger can encourage the return of a missing menstrual cycle and relieve cramping. As a poultice on the lower back, it is very successful in turning a breech baby in the final trimester of pregnancy. The nervous system benefits from ginger in its abilities with headache, migraine, vertigo and low energy.

Keep some fresh ginger in the house to fend off sore throats and colds.

In the immune system, ginger is a strong anti-inflammatory with the ability to block the production of leukotrienes. It has been found to be active against *E. coli*, *Helicobacter pylori*, *Candida albicans*, coliform bacilli, *Staphylococcus aureus* and has a mild action against the polio virus.[3]

Externally it is effective in a bath for cold hands and feet, mosquito bites, fever and chills. As a poultice it can be used over the chest and back for congestion, over the pelvis for increased blood flow to the pelvic organs or cramps or as a salve for arthritis. Infused in an oil it is excellent for varicose veins or stiff muscles. As a diluted wash it can relieve inflammation and pus in the eyes and can also be used to heal up acne.

Contraindications: Pregnant women should avoid eating excessive amounts of ginger. Those with gall bladder obstruction issues should use ginger sparingly.

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)

■ Sedative, hypnotic, antiseptic, astringent

Harvest notes: The hops flower is the part used for medicinal purposes. Flowers can be harvested just before they are completely ripe in late summer. They will still be lightly green and contain yellow pollen under each bract.

The hops plant is a very important nervine. It is universally accepted in most bodies and can be used for headache, insomnia, anxiety, pain (toothache, earache), extreme emotional swings that affect the digestion and as a muscle relaxant. In the musculo-skeletal structure it is helpful both internally and externally for the pain of muscular tension, twitching and backaches. It may also be effective in resolving and easing the pain of boils and aiding in reducing fevers.

The great thing about this plant is that it is also a potent bitter. This is the purpose to which it was used when small beers were first brewed long ago. Today you can occasionally find a microbrew that still features the medicinal aspects of these drinks and allows the hop flavor to shine through. From a digestive standpoint, the hop can be used for increasing appetite and digestive enzymes, suppressing an overactive appetite, indigestion connected with a nervous upset, dry mouth, colic, inability to digest starches, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), mucous colitis, gallbladder problems and jaundice.

Not just for beer, Humulus lupulus *is great for sleep and lactation issues.*

In the respiratory system hops are helpful for strep throat, ear infection, bronchitis and whooping cough. Hops also have something for the urinary and reproductive systems, addressing water retention, incontinence, nocturnal emission, calcium stones in the bladder, cystitis, dysmenorrhea, increasing lactation, easing menopause, reducing excessive sexual desire in men and women, premature ejaculation and acute prostatic disease.

Contraindications: Hops may increase the effect of prescription sedatives. It is possible that they may exacerbate clinical depression.

Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

- Carminative, antispasmodic, antidepressive, antibacterial, antiviral, antihistamine, diaphoretic, hypotensive

Harvest Notes: Everything above the ground can be used from this plant. Leave several leaves behind, and the plant will regenerate. You should be able to harvest two-three times throughout the growing season. Lemon balm is ready to pick just as it is beginning to set its beautiful yellow blossoms.

Lemon balm has been used in the nervous system for headache, depression, nervousness, insomnia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), focus, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), panic attacks and anxiety. It is a specific for those viruses that live in the nervous system such as shingles, chicken pox and herpes. In the circulatory system its antispasmodic effects have been applied successfully to high blood pressure, palpitations and atrial fibrillation. Because of its antihistamine and antispasmodic properties it is helpful with asthma and allergies. In the digestive system it relieves heartburn/indigestion, nausea, vomiting and gas. Topically, it has benefit for burns, blisters, herpes sores and stings. It is also helpful in cases of flu, fever and hyperthyroidism.

*Harvest some Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) in the heat of summer to make a great medicinal iced sun tea.*

Contraindications: Lemon balm is generally not recommended in chronic, high dosage for those with hypothyroidism. It is not recommended in therapeutic doses during pregnancy as it can act as an emmenagogue.

Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)

- Expectorant, demulcent, anti-inflammatory, adrenal agent, antispasmodic, laxative

Harvest notes: The roots of licorice are dug in the fall. In most of the US this plant must be grown indoors or in a pot that can be moved in and out each year.

Licorice is one of the plants we learned about from Native Americans. Its intense sweetness is the reason it became known as the great harmonizer. It still is used in many formulas simply to smooth out the taste of more bitter herbs. Its main component, glycyrrhizin, is structurally similar to adrenal cortical hormones. This is what makes it so important as an adrenal tonic. In the respiratory system it can be used for bronchitis, catarrh and coughs. In the digestive system it is helpful for ulcers, particularly as it has activity against *Helicobacter pylori.* It can also be useful for fibromyalgia, IBS, gastritis and colic.

SCOTT WOOD

We grow licorice in our greenhouse so that it overwinters in Ohio's less than desirable climate.

Licorice is becoming more important to us as our antibiotics become less useful against increasingly resistant bacterial strains. It is known to be useful in cases of food poisoning, flu, chicken pox, *Haemophilus influenzae,* hand foot and mouth disease, hepatitis, measles, meningitis, polio, rotavirus, scarlet fever, strep throat, eczema, psoriasis, shingles, high blood sugar, hypothyroidism and general infection.

The use of this plant has come into some question. The main reason for the fear surrounding its use is due to its history as a cough suppressant. When a Dutch pharmacist began using it heavily in his new cough medicine, it was discovered that the high concentration of glycyrrhetinic acid in his resulting formulation caused sodium and potassium retention. This can contribute to problems with high blood pressure. The presence of asparagine in licorice is believed to counteract this negative reaction if you are using it in its natural plant form rather than as a synthetic compilation. It might also be wise to avoid using a concentrated form of plant medicine such as a licorice tincture in chronic dosage for more than a few weeks at a time.

Contraindications: It is wise to minimize the use of licorice when pregnant or when suffering from hypertension, hypokalemia, cirrhosis of the liver, cholestatic liver disorders, or if you are on thiazide diuretics.

Lobelia (*Lobelia inflata*)

■ Respiratory stimulant, antiasthmatic, antispasmodic, expectorant, emetic

Harvest notes: Lobelia is an annual that is used for its above ground parts. The harvest period is after the plant has bloomed in early fall. Lobelia is in danger due to overharvesting or loss of habitat so it is important to source it responsibly or grow it yourself.

Lobelia is a very strong antispasmodic with a special affinity for the respiratory system. It is effective for emergency asthma treatment, congestion, asthma (exercise induced, bronchial and spasmodic), bronchitis, whooping cough, pneumonia and hiccups. In the digestive system it is effective for food poisoning, hiatal hernia, as an emetic and for heartburn. Lobelia is perfect for severe muscular spasm, epilepsy and any other situation that requires a supreme relaxant.

PRAIRIE MOON NURSERY (WWW.PRAIRIEMOON.COM)]

Lobelia inflata *is a beautiful native annual in the US Midwest. You can contribute to the preservation of this important medicinal by finding a spot for it in your flower garden.*

Lobelia likes to be combined with other herbs to mellow its effects. If you are using it alone, use only one to two drops of tincture at a time. You may continue to use these small doses until the desired result is achieved. Stop when salivation or nausea occurs.

Contraindications: Women who are pregnant or nursing should avoid lobelia. It is not recommended for those with high blood pressure or heart disease.

UNITED PLANT SAVERS

United Plant Savers has identified lobelia as a plant "to watch."

Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

■ Expectorant, demulcent, diuretic, sedative, vulnerary

Harvest notes: The leaves and flowers are used to make medicines. The flower can be harvested in early summer for use in making ear oil. The leaves must be harvested at roughly the same time to ensure you get them before they start to brown.

Mullein is so common that I believe we overlook it in the landscape until we start to look for it purposefully. The tall, dried candelabra of the flower stalk persists through the winter and is a good place to go looking for next year's ground-hugging rosettes. Mullein is a biannual, meaning that you will only see the flowers in the second year, and then the individual plant will be gone leaving behind babies for you next year. This plant has a special affinity for the respiratory system. It has the ability to expel trapped mucus while soothing inflamed soft tissue membranes making it important for cough, congestion, asthma, whooping cough, sinusitis, hoarseness, allergies, pneumonia, croup, emphysema, bronchitis and pleurisy.

In the digestive system it can be used for hemorrhoids, diarrhea, enteritis and colitis. In the nervous system it can be used for nervousness, peace for those with a chattery brain, insomnia, swollen and painful joints, direct injury to the nervous system, spinal injuries. It is a specific for those who have a tendency toward repeated misalignments of the spine.

Mullein's distinctive flower stalk identifies one of our favorite herbs for congestion.

In the urinary system it is helpful for nephritis and painful urination.

Mullein is also helpful for hyperthyroidism, inflammation of the pharynx, mumps and chronically swollen lymph glands. Topically it can be applied as an oil to ear infections and poulticed over bruises.

Contraindications: None known.

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)

■ Diuretic, expectorant, emmenagogue, carminative

Harvest notes: This biennial plant is harvested for its leaves and root. The leaves can be harvested at any time while the root is dug in the fall of the second year. This book's apothecary will focus on the use of parsley leaf.

Parsley leaf is highly nutritious yet often taken for granted as simply a garnish. It is high in calcium and vitamin C. There is enough benefit in this herb to garner a starring role. Its strongest aptitude appears to be as a diuretic. It is useful in the genito-urinary system for urinary tract infections, gout, arthritis, retention of urine, nephritis, gonorrheal impacts on the urinary tract, urethritis, menstrual irregularity and as an adrenal and thyroid tonic.

For most, parsley is just decoration on a restaurant plate to toss aside, but like most culinary herbs it has medicinal purposes that are overlooked.

In the circulatory system parsley is effective for arthritis and low blood pressure. The digestive system benefits from parsley for bad breath, detoxification, poor assimilation, lack of appetite, pain and spasm of the digestive tract, gas, gastritis, liver and gallbladder problems (gallstones), jaundice, colic and constipation. In the nervous system parsley is effective for dizziness. In the respiratory system it can help with allergies, hay fever, colds, cough and asthma.

Externally parsley can be used as a wash for hot and swollen eyes, blepharitis, conjunctivitis, mastitis, acne, eczema, erysipelas, bruising and stings.

Contraindications: Parsley should be used sparingly by women who are nursing.

Plantain (*Plantago* spp.)

■ Expectorant, demulcent, astringent, diuretic

Harvest notes: The leaves are the most used, though you can use the seeds. Leaves are harvested while the plant is flowering. If you want to use them in food, they are the most tender in the spring. Later in the season when they become fibrous, the leaves can be dried for medicinal use or you can pop a few into your bone broth.

Plantain is a special favorite of mine. It is a weed that is found just about anywhere you may go on planet Earth. It is a wonder of versatility, not just providing medicine but also a high amount of nutrition. Plantain is a good source of beta-carotene and calcium. In the digestive system plantain is helpful for gastritis, diarrhea, ulcer, colic and colitis. The soaked seeds are great for constipation; in fact it is a European species of this plant that is used in over-the-counter medications for this problem. The bulk fiber of the seeds from any species of plantain is soothing and cleansing for the intestines. They help control appetite and assist in the digestion of fat and bile. The side effect of this is that plantain can reduce total cholesterol numbers. In China, plantain is used for hepatitis. It also is good for jaundice. For women there is some evidence that the plant can have good results on menorrhagia and vaginitis.

As beekeepers and homesteaders, our first choice to draw out splinters or the poison of bee stings is plantain.

The kidneys are another really important place to use plantain. It is a gentle diuretic and can be used for inflammation, water retention, bladder and urinary tract infections and incontinence. It can be used both internally and externally for a swollen prostate. In the respiratory system it can be used for cough, asthma, catarrh in the sinus or chest, allergy, hay fever, sore throat, upper respiratory infections, fever, tonsillitis, bronchitis, pneumonia and emphysema. Plantain may also be used internally to relieve congestion that causes earache or temporary deafness.

Topically, plantain has quite a bit to offer our eyes. A cool tea wash can help with conjunctivitis, blepharitis, reduction of bloodshot, poor vision, light sensitivity, cataract and sore eyes.

Some of our favorite ways to use plantain involve its abilities with the skin. It can be applied externally as a drawing agent for splinters, infections, insect stings and bites and poison ivy. It is also a vulnerary herb so it is good for burns, wounds, boils, abscesses, sunburn, acne, impetigo, eczema and to stop bleeding. The leaves can be applied externally for lower back pain, sprains, strains and neuralgia. Drinking the tea or using it as a mouthwash can help with abscessed teeth, infected root canals or thrush. I have even chewed a fresh poultice and put it against a tooth that had food impacted below the gumline. It worked like a charm and could very easily do the same for infection. My favorite application in the mouth for plantain, though, is chewing it as a natural breath freshener.

Contraindications: None known.

Sage (*salvia officinalis*)

■ Carminative, antispasmodic, antiseptic, astringent, anhidrotic

Harvest notes: The leaves are used for medicine and the flowers are a delicious edible. Leaves should be collected on a dry day just before or just as the plant is beginning to flower.

Sage is one of the herbs we love that is exceedingly high in volatile oils. This makes it especially good for ailments in the digestive system such as bleeding gums, tongue inflammation, sore throat, laryngitis, tonsillitis, gall bladder issues with digesting fats and oils, gas, parasites, chronic diarrhea, ulcer and excessive salivation.

This wonderful plant is also well known for its work in the reproductive system. It has been talked up for some time in regard to menopausal hot flashes. It does indeed cool the experience of a hot flash while also providing a tonic to the underlying endocrine imbalance in the adrenals that causes them. Sage is useful for missed cycles and a lack of sufficient bleeding in them, imbalances in sexual desire for both men and women, morning sickness, yeast infection and cysts in the breasts. Because of its ability to dry the fluids in our bodies sage is often used to decrease the flow of breast milk while weaning a child to solid foods. There is a difference in how sage behaves that depends on the temperature at which it is served. A warm sage tea will encourage secretions in the body, encouraging sweating to reduce a fever. A room temperature tea will allow the antibacterial qualities of sage to shine; this is how you want to serve your sore throat tea. A cold tea will decrease the flow of secretions and cause tissues to dry up.

One of the most prized herbs on our farm, Salvia officinalis *goes far beyond culinary flavoring.*

In the nervous system, sage has applications for canker sores, herpes, memory improvement for Alzheimer’s patients, arthritis, epilepsy, palsy, headache and insomnia. For the circulatory and lymphatic systems sage has benefits for lipoma, hair loss, dandruff, excessively dry skin, blood stagnation, dissolving clots and coagulation and stroke. In the urinary tract it can help with cystitis and stones.

Contraindications: Sage should not be taken in chronic or excessive doses in pregnancy. During lactation it should be avoided in more than small amounts in food. Avoid internal use of essential oil or alcoholic extracts during this time as well, due to the presence of thujone which can be an emmenagogue and abortifacient.

St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

■ Anti-inflammatory, astringent, vulnerary, sedative

Harvest notes: Traditionally St. John’s wort was picked on The Feast of St. John at the end of June. Here in Ohio, that is indeed when its blooms are at their peak, and all parts above ground can be harvested. If you are wishing to make St. John’s wort oil, it is the buds just as they are about to open that you need.

The use of St. John’s wort rose in popularity when I was in college, and then shortly thereafter it almost disappeared from common conversation. At that time it developed a bad reputation due to a misrepresentation that the plant acted as an MAO inhibitor and posed a threat to blood pressure. Subsequent research supports the fact that this is not true. The only study that we have representing a possible threat is one in which cattle dining on large amounts of St. John’s wort showed an increase in photosensitivity.[4] So, in honor of the ridiculous, it may be worth avoiding large salads of St. John’s wort during a beach vacation when you might not want a higher risk of sunburn. In all seriousness, St. John’s wort may not be the best therapy if you are perhaps undergoing UV treatment of any kind.

RACHAEL BRUGGER

The bright yellow flowers of St. John's Wort make a beautiful blood red oil for burns and bruises.

This plant is most active in the nervous system. It is indicated for headache, shingles, anxiety, depression, general pain, pain due to damage to the nervous system, insomnia, seasonal affective disorder, chronic fatigue, mental burnout, concussion, meningitis, fibromyalgia, neuralgia, sciatica and paralysis. Due to its anti-inflammatory and astringent nature, St. John's wort is able to address more than just those issues that affect other organ systems due to stress on the nervous system. In the digestive tract it is helpful for gum disease, bad breath, weak and disturbed digestion, gastroenteritis, anemia, lack of appetite, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, jaundice and compromised immunity. The herb is effective at balancing stomach acidity and supporting the liver in its work to process toxicity (especially that of prescription and over-the-counter drugs). In the urinary system St. John's wort may be used for bladder ailments that stem from stress, bedwetting, retained urine and urinary tract infections and ulcers. For reproductive health, the herb can help with dysmenorrhia, menorrhagia and after birth pain.

Topically it is often made into a blood red oil and is very effective for sunburn, bruising, wounds, blood poisoning, hard swollen tumors in the breasts, tetanus, burns, ulcers, skin tags, corns, boils, carbuncles and radiation burns.

One of my favorite uses for this plant is mentioned by Matthew Wood — and that is to strengthen the gut instinct.[5] For that application, you might try St. John's wort flower essence in particular. That might just be a part of the prescription of this book. Enjoy a little bit of St. John's wort while you read these pages to strengthen your resolve to get back into touch with your inner knowing and learn to trust your gut instinct.

Contraindications: St. John's wort should be avoided while pregnant or undergoing UV light and solarium therapy.

Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)

- Anti-inflammatory, astringent, carminative, cardiac tonic, diaphoretic, vermifuge, diuretic

Harvest notes: This is a native perennial in the US. Everything above ground may be used. It is best harvested just as the flowers are beginning to develop in an ongoing fashion from spring through fall.

This herb is a stimulant in the class of herbs called nervines. In the nervous system wild bergamot helps with nervousness, nerve damage-related hearing loss, herpes and anxiety. The aromatics of this plant make it especially useful in the digestive system for diarrhea, gallstones, appendicitis, indigestion, yeast overgrowth and constipation. Because it is also astringent it has been used specifically to tone the pores that become inflamed in the intestines leading to leaky gut syndrome. Wild bergamot can be an important part of any therapy aimed at returning health to the digestive system when it has lost its good bacterial colonies and become weakened and unable to assimilate.

Wild bergamot can be difficult to grow, but makes a great native for masses of color.

Wild bergamot is a mild diuretic and therefore has been used for urinary tract infection, high blood pressure and tinnitus. It may be placed in a steam to take advantage of the essential oils for bronchial asthma. Topically, the plant may be used for burns, sunburn and fungal overgrowth.

Contraindications: Wild bergamot is not recommended in therapeutic doses for pregnant women.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

■ Diaphoretic, hypotensive, astringent, diuretic, antiseptic

Harvest notes: Everything above ground, yes, even the flowers can be harvested from yarrow. It is a perennial and is harvested as the plant just starts to flower anytime from midsummer to early fall.

Yarrow is a mover. It tends to help move fluid in the body, so it has applications in bloating, inflammation and swelling. I once prevented some pretty nasty swelling after spraining both my ankles simply by placing the herb on my skin as a quick poultice. This ability to move fluid also makes the herb successful with headache, stroke, vertigo and earache that is due to inflammation in the ear canal or sinuses.

In the respiratory system yarrow can be used for stuffy sinuses (applied both internally and externally), bronchitis, pleurisy, pneumonia and allergies. In digestion it excels in aiding with digestive cramping, colitis, diverticulitus and hemorrhoids. The female reproductive system can benefit from yarrow's ability to address missing periods, menorrhagia, cramping, endometriosis, uterine fibroids, uterine prolapse and menopausal night sweats.

With a fascinating history and impressive medicinal qualities, the feathery leaves of yarrow will easily make it one of your favorite herbs to grow.

Yarrow's astringency can help with bleeding both internal and external. It is good topically for bee sting, wrinkles, psoriasis, varicose veins, nosebleed, bruises and cuts. In the mouth it has been used successfully for toothache and gingivitis. In the urinary tract it is a nice diuretic, addressing such issues as nephritis, cystitis, bloating, incontinence, arthritis, gout, high blood pressure and rheumatism. I like to use yarrow to temper fever. It is an excellent diaphoretic.

There are many common uses for yarrow, but I find the most intriguing uses for this plant are also the least talked about. It is a very useful internal treatment for radiation and blood sugar irregularities. In the case of radiation, the plant can be used in whole plant applications or as a flower essence as part of a comprehensive plan to move toxicity out of the body.

Yarrow is an important piece of history to add to your garden. Spend some time getting to know this very storied herb throughout literature and mythology. You won't regret having this one in your medicine cabinet.

Contraindications: Intake of yarrow should be minimized during pregnancy and lactation. Avoid internal use of essential oil or alcoholic

extracts during this time as well due to the presence of thujone that can be an emmenagogue and abortifacient.

Part IV:

Emergency and First Aid Situations

MANY EMERGENCY ISSUES CAN BE HANDLED AT HOME, but some will require a call for an ambulance or transfer to the emergency room. Take a deep breath and assess each situation calmly. Be aware of your limitations. When the issue requires more skill than you have, always assess immediate dangers that could be triaged while you wait for help. Excessive bleeding can and should be stopped. When someone isn't breathing, it is important to clear an airway or administer a preparation to relax spasms therein. If someone has taken a dangerous fall or there is any possibility that they may have an injury to their spine, it is best to help them as much as possible without moving them. Any time you transfer to the hospital, it can be helpful to administer Rescue Remedy®. When you need outside help, it is usually due to a rather serious injury or illness. To improve your confidence and round out your skill set you may consider taking a course in CPR.

Asthma Attack

- Lobelia

In an asthma attack the bronchioles in the lungs seize up and make it impossible to breathe in oxygen. This is a very strong spasm specific to lung tissue and occurs as a natural defense mechanism of the body against something unknown or unidentifiable.

One of the best antispasmodics we have is lobelia. This plant, when kept in the cupboard as a tincture, makes a perfect emergency treatment in the case of an asthma attack. It is important to administer a very low dose of lobelia. Just one to two drops will help to open the airways. Most asthma attacks are fairly serious, and you should call for emergency assistance. While you wait for help, lobelia can ensure that the affected person continues to get oxygen.

Bleeding

See also Wounds.

- Cayenne
- Yarrow

Cuts can be scary depending on where they are located. When they are on the head the bleeding can be so profuse that the situation can easily seem out of control. The first order of business with any cut is to assess the bleeding. Until you can truly understand the situation, you do not want to remove anything from the wound. In minor cuts the bleeding mechanism itself is engineered to wash away debris and germs. Allowing a little bit of bleeding in this case is good.

In a normal situation, you will want to wash away any dirt or debris with soap and water or an antiseptic spray. Next you'll want to apply your herb of choice to the wound. Powders are really nice here and are a good reason to keep them in the first aid kit, but many plants can be applied fresh-picked after just a bit of bruising. This is not a good situation to use a dried leaf since that could be painful against any damaged skin. Apply

pressure with clean, absorbent cloths. Cotton is a good option, but in a pinch I have used menstrual pads.

Serious Wounds

- If you have a puncture wound that is not bleeding — Apply a drawing poultice just as you would for splinters/foreign objects/bites and stings.
- If you have bleeding that is so profuse that it is soaking through pressure cloths and will not stop — Sprinkle the powdered herb of your choice and apply pressure while you wait for an emergency squad or head to your local emergency room yourself.
- If you have a large foreign object embedded in the body — In some cases, it is imperative that you leave a foreign object that has punctured or gone through any body part. In a serious injury, the pressure that the object provides will prevent catastrophic bleeding. Apply pressure with clean cloth around the wound while you wait for an emergency squad. If the object is small, not near a vital organ and the injured party can be safely moved, head to your local emergency room yourself.

Alternatives for internal/external application: calendula, lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*), plantain, shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)

Broken Bones

- Boneset
- Comfrey

This is a situation where, of course, if you suspect that you have a broken bone you need to seek medical attention. Natural treatment of something like this begins after you have had an x-ray and have been fitted for a cast or splint. Boneset as a tea, tincture or capsule is one of the best internal herbs for helping the body to heal a broken bone. If you are not confined to a cast and instead have an immobilizer that can be removed, you may choose to use comfrey either on its own or while you use boneset internally. Comfrey can be used as a bath to soak the affected area or as a compress at least once a day.

Bruises

- Calendula

- Comfrey
- Elder Leaves
- Mullein
- Yarrow

Bruising occurs when we experience blunt force trauma that breaks open blood vessels beneath our skin. As the blood continues to flow through these traumatized areas, it seeps out into the surrounding skin causing discoloration. The faster the broken blood vessel is able to heal, the less bruising there will be. You could treat a bruise with a topical application of any of the herbs listed above — either as a liniment, salve, poultice or compress. You might also be able to soak the affected body part in an herbal bath.

Alternatives for external application: Arnica (*Arnica montana*), chickweed, cucumber, lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*), St. John's wort

Burns

- Calendula
- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- St. John's Wort

Burns come in many forms, so it is important to understand the various ways in which we need to treat them:

- First degree burns — These are superficial burns that involve redness, pain and some localized swelling. They may be tender to the touch. Most sunburns are classified as first degree burns. These burns may be treated with a topical application of any of the herbs above, especially St. John's wort oil.
- Second degree burns — This burn tends to go deeper and in addition to everything that a first degree burn causes there may also be blistering. First and foremost, never pop the blisters. It is important to cool the skin and pull out the heat without opening these blisters and inviting

infection. Topical applications of the herbs above, especially comfrey with the addition of honey, is helpful for these burns.

- Third degree burns — The worst types of burns involve damage through all layers of skin. It is generally painless because of the damage done to blood vessels and nerve endings. The skin often turns leathery or falls apart altogether. Honey is one of the best treatments for this type of burn. Slather it on in thick layers and cover the skin with a thin layer of breathable gauze. This is definitely a case in which you should seek medical attention.
- Friction burns — These would be the burns that occur in a fall or other accident. Rug burns, rope burns and carpet burns aren't fun, but they also don't tend to be too serious or difficult to treat. It is best to clean the burn by gently washing it with soap and water. Next use an all-purpose salve that contains either St. John's wort oil or calendula. If it will be impossible to keep the burn clean until it scabs over, you may cover loosely with a thin layer of gauze. It is best to keep these minor burns open to the air whenever possible. If you must keep one covered, make sure you sit in a clean environment for a while every day without a covering.

All types of burn should be considered a break in the skin as they interrupt the normal protective barrier mechanism that skin, our largest organ, provides. Special attention should be paid to infection prevention, keeping the area clean and minimizing exposure to unhealthy and unclean environments while you are healing.

Alternatives for external application: aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), chickweed, cucumber, elder, eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), honey, plantain

Constipation

- Chickweed
- Elder
- Garlic
- Parsley
- Plantain

- Wild Bergamot

The bowels should move at least once or twice a day. When they do, the process of eliminating waste is the culmination of a healthy digestive process. When they don't, we hold onto waste materials that at the very least can make us sick. Constipation can be a very serious situation; the longer our bowels refuse to move, the less blood flow is allowed into our pelvic cavity. At its worst, this condition can contribute to the death of whole sections of our intestines. It's a good idea to be aware of the plants that can gently encourage intestinal muscular activity (peristalsis) when we first notice the condition. All of the plants listed above can be used alone or in combination in a tea, combined with food, in a capsule or in a tincture to promote healthy elimination.

Constipation is a good reason to have a great bitters formulation among your supplies. Sometimes just a day's dosing with bitters before meals can get sluggish digestion moving on its own.

If, for some reason, your bowel muscles are not capable of performing healthy peristalsis, you may have need of some of the stronger cathartics that can be found in the alternatives list.

Alternatives for internal application: aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*), barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), bitters, butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), cascara sagrada (*Rhamnus purshiana*), senna (*Senna alexandrina*), triphala, turkey rhubarb (*Rheum* spp.), yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*)

Diarrhea

- Calendula
- Chickweed
- Mullein
- Plantain
- Sage

Just as with a fever, I tend to think it is good to let the body run its course a bit with diarrhea. This too is a natural defense mechanism that allows us to rid ourselves of something that is problematic. Let the body purge for part of a day while ensuring that there is plenty of liquid intake. If the person is

struggling with the griping in their stomach, you may try a simple lemon balm tea to ease their suffering. The biggest concern with someone who is experiencing a bout of diarrhea is dehydration. In a normally healthy person, the time to intervene and bring the diarrhea to an end is when nothing is being passed except water. For a person who is already in a weakened state you may consider intervening earlier; keep a very close eye on them.

When you decide to stop the diarrhea you may do so with a tea or tincture. This is one ailment that I really prefer a tincture because tinctures work faster.

Alternatives for internal application: blackberry root (*Rubus fruticosus*), garlic, ginger, self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), St. John's wort, triphala, wild bergamot

Ear Infection

- Garlic
- Mullein

One of the simplest things to treat at home is an ear infection. I would argue that home treatment is more effective and ultimately healthier. Repeated rounds of antibiotics for the ears can lead to chronic ear infections and eventually the necessity for surgeries.

It can sometime be difficult to determine when there is an infection. Difficulty hearing may be caused by nerve issues (rub St. John's wort oil behind the ears) or may be the result of a buildup of wax. Any pain in the ears, along the jawline or under the teeth or runny discharge from the ear canal can be a sign that there is infection. In children, you will often see them rubbing their ears more than usual.

Mullein and garlic are the best things for ear infection. You may make an oil to store in the medicine cupboard of one or both of them together. At the first sign of infection, warm the oil to body temperature and place three to four drops in each ear three to four times a day. Continue this several times a day until symptoms have subsided. Always treat both ears regardless of where you see evidence of infection. The ears are connected and will otherwise pass infection back and forth. Itchy ears often signal that

you are having sensitivity to one of the foods that you are eating so a food journal might be helpful here.

For ringing in the ears see Tinnitus.

Eye Issues

- Calendula
- Ginger
- Parsley
- Plantain

Our eyes require special care. They are a very specialized surface so it can often seem intimidating to care for them at home. They are, in truth, very easy to mend in most cases. For the most part it is easy to apply an herb as a tea. By leaning over a sink and pouring a cooled herbal tea from the inner corner of the eye to the outer corner, one can apply an eye wash. If you have an eye cup, you can place the tea in the cup and lean the head back to apply it to the eye.

Soreness and redness of the eye can happen after too much sun or wind, or simply not enough sleep. Dryness that persists can signal that there is in internal imbalance (often with the kidneys) that should be diagnosed by a professional physician. Anytime there is swelling, pain or pus draining from the eye it should be treated more seriously. This is the signal that there is an infection. Eye infections can be treated at home, but like everything else, if you do not see improvement within a couple of days of treatment you should seek help from a medical professional.

Common Eye Issues

- Dry or Irritated Eyes — Apply a tea of parsley, calendula or plantain as needed.
- Blepharitis (inflammation of the eyelids) — Plantain tea can be applied topically as a wash or as a cool compress.
- Conjunctivitis — Apply a tea of parsley and/or plantain or a very weak tea of ginger to the eyes two to three times a day until the infection is gone. If the eyes get dry or irritated with repeated applications, add a small amount of honey to the tea. This should be combined with your choice of herbs for treating an infection internally.

Alternatives for external application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), raw honey

Fever

- Boneset
- Elder
- Ginger
- Yarrow

What most people don't know about fever could fill a grocery store aisle — in fact, it kind of does. The number of products out there that attempt to shield us from this natural protection mechanism is mind-blowing. We have been brainwashed to think that fever is a syndrome in and of itself. Well-intentioned parents that treat a fever are causing more harm than good. A fever is not a malfunction in the body that needs to be corrected; rather it is a sign that things are running appropriately and there is a fight going on. The body raises its temperature because a higher heat setting is often successful all on its own to kill off an overgrowth of bad bacteria or viral invaders. In children, a temperature can also mean no illness at all. Fever can often accompany the teething process.

One should *never* interrupt a fever unless it is excessively high or prolonged. In an adult, when you start to head north of 102°F, it may be time to step in. In a child past the age of one, you can see a temperature of 104°F and still not necessarily be in too much trouble. You wouldn't want to see temperatures hovering at the top of these ranges for very long. You also don't want to see a temperature prolonged for more than a couple of days. Every time we interrupt this natural process we cripple the immune system a little more — and we also give unwelcome visitors a chance to regroup and get stronger. Ever wonder why, after your child gets one illness and you break the fever quickly, that they keep getting the same or related illnesses again and again? Interfering with the fever's process is how it's done!

If you have an excessively high or prolonged fever, or one that is accompanied by disorientation, it is time to intercede. And of course, it is

important to mention that the safe temperature threshold may be exceeded at a much lower number in someone whose system started out compromised. As with any other natural treatment, you must always take into account the overall constitution of the person you're treating. In a typical person though, when the usual threshold has been reached, you can turn to the herbs that are classified as febrifuges.

Febrifuges are herbs that help to reduce a fever, usually by encouraging the sweating mechanism. Sweat is our body's natural air conditioning. Once your patient begins to sweat, you know the fever has broken and their body temperature is on its way back down to normal. There are many herbs that can help out here, but my favorites are yarrow, elder, boneset and ginger.

There are different ways to get your patient to take these herbs — it all depends on the other symptoms of the illness. I always prefer a tea, but you can use a bath, a tincture or a combination of therapies. Pour a hot bath and put one or more anti-pyretic (another term for febrifuge) herbs in a large tea ball. It is important to soak in the tub as long as it is comfortable. This is a good time to also sip a hot, anti-pyretic tea if they are able to keep anything down. As soon as the bath is over, have them dry off as quickly as possible, dress warmly, wrap in several warm blankets and go straight to bed. Your patient should be sweating in no time!

The last time I treated myself this way I had a sore throat that hurt even to swallow my own spit. My fever was 103°F and going north. Incidentally, my nine-month-old daughter had a temperature of 102°F. My husband didn't understand the nature of fevers and was very concerned about my daughter and ignoring me. When he called my mom for some advice, she caught him off guard by asking if I was hallucinating! Through it all I was able to tell him how to make a tea and bath for me, but my fever was stubborn and wouldn't break. I wound up asking him to wrap me up head to toe in several blankets and then lay down on top of me; this finally cooked me enough to start me sweating, and I got better from there. That is, of course, an extreme measure and it might not be the right thing for every illness or every person, but I can tell you I didn't get that sore throat again as many others did!

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), borage (*Borago officinalis*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), cayenne, chamomile

(*Matricaria recutita*), horseradish, mustard (*Brassica hirta*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), pleurisy root (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Alternatives for external application: catnip, mustard, peppermint

Food Poisoning

- Garlic
- Ginger
- Licorice Root
- Lobelia

Ginger is one of my favorite remedies for food poisoning. A cup of ginger tea will soothe the stomach and target the invasion of bad bacteria that rode in on your food. You could tincture any of the herbs above if you were prone to food poisoning, or traveling and needed a remedy just in case. Otherwise, ginger and licorice root can be made into a tea, and garlic can be added to food to prevent infection. Tea is such a great option with food poisoning because usually the first sign you have a problem is vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms tend to show up in a relatively short period of time after you've eaten, usually a matter of hours. The danger of food poisoning in a normally healthy adult is in the possibility of dehydration. It is helpful to allow the body to purge normally for a time. Don't try to stop the cycle of vomit or diarrhea until all that is being passed is water. When the affected person is at that stage, you may begin treating with herbs listed under diarrhea or nausea. Continue to introduce teas, especially gentle, stomach calming teas, during the whole treatment.

If you eat something that you are later concerned may give you trouble, lobelia is a great tincture to have around. Ten to fifteen drops should be enough to make you vomit, but if it isn't, wait a bit and repeat the dose.

If there doesn't seem to be any way to stop the purging of the body and/or the affected person is getting listless, their heart rate is erratic or they are having trouble remaining conscious, seek professional medical attention immediately.

One of the best preventions to repeated food poisoning is a healthy gut. Read further in the digestive section of Part V for tips on that.

Alternatives for internal application: activated charcoal, chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), uva ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Headaches

- Ginger
- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- St. John's Wort

There can be many reasons for headaches. They can come on from lack of food, the wrong food, lack of water, too much sun, illness, lack of sleep, nervous system dysfunction and many more simple as well as some serious issues. Determining the cause can sometimes help with the treatment. If you believe it may be due to eating too much of the wrong kind of food, you can often give the suffering person something salty to clear the headache very quickly. If that doesn't work, you'll have to use herbs and traditional therapies.

Start by having the affected person sit down in a quiet room. Herbal foot baths are especially helpful when soothing a headache. The water should be heated as hot as they can stand. Add whatever herbs you would like, but I especially recommend hops. Place the bath at the base of a chair with their feet in it and wrap them and the tub with a towel to keep in the heat. The herbs listed above may each be used alone or combined into a tea or tincture. While the affected person sits, treat them with whatever method you choose. Tinctures work very quickly and are often preferred in the case of a headache, but if the person in question has the headache because they have been rushing around and not taking care of themselves, a tea may be the best medicine. Have a tea pre-formulated for just such an occasion, or if you need to treat yourself.

Another really nice therapy is to keep a chilled washcloth that is sprinkled with a few drops of lavender essential oil in the freezer. Allow the washcloth to defrost enough to wrap around the base of the neck or to rest over the temples and eyes.

Having an occasional headache can be normal. If you or someone you love is having frequent headaches, it is time to seek the help of a

professional physician in the form of a chiropractor, acupuncturist or general practitioner.

Alternatives for internal application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*), garlic, marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

Heart Attack/Stroke

- Cayenne

In cases of a heart attack or stroke, the blood vessels have seized up and are not allowing blood, and thereby oxygen, to flow freely. The greatest damage during an episode like this occurs when the heart and/or brain are starved for oxygen for any period of time. Make no mistake, this is a serious situation requiring an emergency call for medics; that is the first step. Once that call has been made, there are things that can be done at home to help. If the person is conscious, fill a glass with two to four ounces of water and to it add one teaspoon of cayenne pepper powder. Have them drink it all at once. This will not be a fun or comfortable procedure, but it is very important. If you happen to have tinctured cayenne you can use two to three droppersful and repeat every five minutes. If the person is unconscious, it is best to use a tincture and cut the dosage by half, applying the tincture between the cheek and gum while you or someone else is performing CPR. Cayenne is a powerful vasodilator. It can mean the difference between waiting for the ambulance while receiving oxygen to your brain and heart or waiting without it.

If you are having an episode and are at home alone, call for the emergency squad, treat yourself with cayenne and then go sit on the floor next to the front door. If you ensure that the door is unlocked and medics can get to you easily, you will be assured of faster attention should you be unconscious when they get there.

In a heart attack symptoms can vary, and it is important to know that they can be different for men and women. Generally, there is pain, fullness or pressure in the chest. There is usually referred pain in the arm, left shoulder, jaw, neck, back or just below the breastbone. There may be no

pain, but instead a difficulty to “catch one’s breath.” There is often a feeling of anxiety, irregular heartbeat, dizziness, extreme weakness, vomiting, indigestion or nausea. Sweating is common.

If you suspect a stroke, the American Heart Association recommends the FAST test:

> F — Face Drooping: Ask the person to smile and look for any lack of symmetry in their lips.
> A — Arm Weakness: Can the person put both arms up in the air and keep them there? Someone who is having a stroke will have one arm that won’t stay up.
> S — Speech Difficulty: Is their speech slurred? Are they difficult to understand? Ask them to repeat a simple sentence like “Roses are red.”
> T — Time to call 911: If any of these symptoms are present it is important to call for help.[1]

Heartburn and Indigestion

- Ginger
- Lemon Balm

When I first met my husband, he used to keep antacids in a jar and routinely ate them like candy after his lunch hour. It took some convincing to get him to understand that those over-the-counter-tablets were causing more harm than good. We seem to have a culture-wide belief that acid indigestion and heartburn are always caused by too much acid in the stomach. In fact, it’s often the opposite. The pain and burning in the center of the chest after a meal can be caused by too little acid in the stomach and an inactive digestion. The food causes irritation in the stomach, and the body fights back. Those antacids my husband was taking were further depleting the stomach’s production of acid causing a negative feedback loop that ensured his dependence on the antacid company.

Today my husband takes better care of his digestion with a whole foods diet. When we notice stomach irritation, we alter our diet or remember to use our bitters. Bitters won’t help you relieve pain in a first aid situation;

instead they help the body perform properly so you don’t have pain to relieve in the first place. They are taken by the capful or dropper about 15–20 minutes before a meal to ensure appropriate digestive fluid is in place before food gets to the stomach. This hard work rebalancing the system is important, but when there is pain and burning, all someone wants to know is how to shut it off.

When you or a loved one is experiencing heartburn or indigestion, the symptoms can be relieved with either a lemon balm or ginger tea after each meal. You might even get creative and make a lozenge you can take with you away from home. Really, most herbs that are high in volatile oils can help to settle and soothe the stomach. If you combine the first aid with what you need to do to heal the problem, you’ll be better off in the long run.

Heartburn Lozenge

¼ cup distilled water
¼ cup lemon balm powder
¼ cup ginger powder
2 tablespoons honey

Mix all ingredients together, adding more liquid or powder as needed to make a stiff dough. Pinch off bean-sized pieces, roll them between your fingers and then flatten them into a shape that is easy to suck on. These lozenges may be stored as is in the refrigerator, but to make them shelf stable they need to be placed on a screen and allowed to dry.

Alterntatives for internal application: allspice (*Pimenta dioica*), blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*), calamus (*Acorus calamus*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), cayenne, chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*), dill seed (*Anethum graveolens*), fennel seed (*Foeniculum vulgare*), gentian (*Gentiana lutea*), marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Infections — External and Internal

- Boneset
- Echinacea
- Elder
- Garlic
- Ginger

Infections are one of the most common things that send us to the doctor. With a little planning and common sense, many of them can be completely healed at home without the use of prescribed antibiotics. Infections can also be a very simple issue that can have dangerous consequences. It is important to exercise caution while proceeding with confidence. Always keep an eye on an infection, whether it is internal or external. Watch for signs that home treatment is not successful, and know when it is important to seek the help of a professional physician.

External Infection

There are so many ways to get an infection on our skin. Even if we practice the best hygiene and stay on top of first aid for wounds, burns and rashes, infections happen. The first thing to do is to assess the type of infection and the type of wound.

INFECTIONS THAT ARE TRAPPED

If you have an infection that is trapped under the skin you will generally see redness, swelling and pain. You may see pus seeping out of a wound like this. In these instances it may be wise to apply drawing herbs such as plantain in combination with any of the herbs above in the form of a salve, compress or poultice.

SIMPLE SKIN INFECTIONS

This type of infection can occur around a common cut, bite or sting. The skin will get red and swollen and may be painful or itchy. When you notice that you have an infection at the source of an injury like this, it can be helpful to draw a circle with a pen around the red area. You may treat the

wound with any of the herbs above in the form of a liniment, cream, salve, bath, poultice or compress. As you treat, keep an eye on your circle. If the infection continues to spread or develops red lines radiating away from the original injury, it is time to seek help from a medical professional.

STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (INCLUDING MRSA)

Staph infections usually start out as red bumps that look like spider bites or pimples. There may be a fever or rash as well. As the infection gets worse the bumps get bigger and more painful and eventually break open to seep. These infections are dangerous if left untreated because they go deeper into the body and may eventually require amputation. There are multiple strains of these bacteria, and many of them are becoming resistant to antibiotics. While they can be present anywhere humans congregate, they are especially prevalent in the hospital setting and can enter anywhere the skin is broken for routine test or treatment procedures.

In the case of a staph infection, whether it is resistant or not, there are herbs that have been shown to kill off the bacteria. The herbs in our apothecary that work are licorice, ginger, echinacea, boneset and elder (berries and flowers). Unlike minor skin infections, it is not advisable to use a salve when treating a staph infection. For that reason, it is best to make an herbal liniment with one or more of the specific herbs or to use a compress. Be very certain to change the compress often and always use a new cloth. You might even try a compress of raw ground potato, which has been known to be effective against staph infections. While this type of infection can be treated at home, it is important that you follow the directions for a simple skin infection. In addition, watch for any kind of fever or secondary problems. If the wound gets bigger, if the redness spreads in any way or the injured party exhibits any new symptoms, get to your physician immediately for treatment.

Internal Infection

When I think of internal infections I am put in mind of cold and flu season. Respiratory infections are the most common types of infection in my house, but you may treat many other types of infection in the same way. Internal

infections can be treated with a tea, tincture or pill made from the herbs above.

Alternatives for internal/external application: cayenne, cleavers (*Galium aparine*), fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), garlic, ginger, goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*), Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Muscle Pain/Pulled Muscles

- Cayenne
- Hops

No matter your lifestyle, there will always be times when you overwork your muscles in exercise or play. When that happens, hops and cayenne can be combined to make a liniment or salve to soothe pain and inflammation in that area. The salve should be applied two to three times a day; also drink plenty of liquids. If you have overdone it and don't have anything prepared, you can simply soak in a bath of these herbs to get a similar effect. Unless the strain is severe, it is not recommended to rest the area completely. Instead, gentle movement can be very beneficial to move out any lactic acid and feed muscles with oxygen for faster healing.

Alternatives for internal application: arnica — homeopathic only (*Arnica montana*), turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

Alternatives for external application: arnica — on unbroken skin only, peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), turmeric

Nausea

- Calendula
- Ginger
- Lemon Balm

All of the herbs that can be used to relieve nausea can be tinctured, but why bother? They are all so delicious and easy to make into a tea that that happens to be the best way to use them. Ginger is king in this situation, but a combination of all three of the above herbs or any of them alone would be very effective. It is best to assess why someone is nauseous while creating a treatment plan. If there is a reason to allow the body to purge, it may be necessary to allow that to happen. Nausea can come on as a result of a middle ear infection, motion sickness and much more. In these cases, there is no reason to allow someone to vomit. Keep the affected individual quiet and comfortable, have them sip small amounts of tea and keep food simple or absent until the sickness passes. If they become dehydrated or aren't able to keep any food down after a couple days, seek medical attention immediately.

Alternatives for internal application: cayenne, chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*)

Poison Ivy/Oak/Sumac and Rashes

- Lemon Balm
- Plantain

Once you have one of these rashes, there isn't any "healing" the rash; there is only riding it out in the best way. It is often said that jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) is a remedy, but it is really more of an antidote. If you have just come into contact with a poisonous ivy/oak/sumac plant, you can use a jewelweed succus to prevent the oils from binding to the skin. Once they have settled, the itchy rash is inevitable.

The goal in treatment of these rashes is to pull the oils out of the skin and to prevent them from spreading. Hot baths and showers are absolutely out! The heat will only serve to lift the oils and move them to a new area of skin. To pull the oils out it is best to use a drawing herb like plantain. I like to combine plantain powder with green clay to make a plaster. Each time this plaster dries, it can be rinsed off with cool water and a new one applied.

Peppermint essential oil can be added to soothe the itch. In severe cases, ice packs can be used. Drink lemon balm tea to relax the nervous system and increase the person's ability to withstand the aggravation of the rash.

It is very important that the affected person watch their diet during an active rash of this type. Eating refined sugars and flours will only serve to feed the inflammation and irritation and keep the rash thriving.

Alternatives for external application: apple cider vinegar, mint toothpaste

Shock

- Rescue Remedy®

In the event a serious injury or illness occurs, you will be on your way to the hospital or waiting for emergency personnel to come to you. One of the dangers of a serious loss of bodily fluid (this can be blood or water content) is the resulting state of shock to the body. This is a condition related to improper oxygenation of tissues that can result from an interruption in proper blood flow. Typically a person who is experiencing shock will have very low blood pressure and a rapid heartbeat. They may also be confused, have a decreased amount of urinary output or lose consciousness. Some other signs that a person is in shock may be shallow or rapid breathing, cold and clammy skin and sometimes a splotchy look to their extremities. It is imperative to keep someone who is in shock awake and calm while you seek help. Rescue Remedy® given under the tongue in two to four drop doses every 15–20 minutes is just about the best thing you can do.

Sore Throat Spritzer

2 tablespoons echinacea tincture
2 tablespoons raw honey
1 tablespoon warm water
2 drops essential oil of your choice (peppermint, eucalyptus or tea tree are great)

Mix all ingredients together in a two-ounce spray bottle. Keep this in the refrigerator, and it should keep for a couple months. Always shake before spraying and use as needed.

Sore Throat

- Echinacea
- Sage

For sore throats my absolute favorite remedy is sage tea served lukewarm. Temperature does matter when it comes to this plant, and lukewarm is where it is at its best in fending off bacteria. In our house if someone has a mild sore throat we make a strong sage tea with honey and lemon, and the throat heals very quickly. When the sore throat is a little more serious, we use sage tea as a gargle and combine it with a pinch of salt and cayenne. The gargle is used every couple of hours and is very effective.

If we need to be away from the house while one of us is suffering with a sore throat, I will often make an echinacea spritzer. The best part about this spritzer is that it can fight the infection while providing a soothing numbing sensation.

Alternatives for internal application: balm of gilead (*Populus balsamifera*), barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), cayenne, chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), garlic, ginger, goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), mullein, myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), oak bark (*Quercus* spp.), plantain, thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Splinters/Foreign Objects/Bites and Stings

- Plantain

In all of these instances the common denominator is the need to draw something out. When I was a kid and had some sort of a splinter, the treatment involved digging with a needle and tweezers. In my household today we have progressed from that sort of surgery to the use of plants. We are also beekeepers, so I've experimented with a number of remedies that are said to relieve the pain of bites and stings. I've found that my favorite remedy for all of the above is plantain.

Splinters/Foreign Objects

Chew up a bit of fresh plantain or mix plantain powder with a bit of water and place it on the skin where the object appears to have entered. Cover with a bandage. Check at least once a day to see if the object has surfaced. When it has, you may pull it out with a pair of tweezers. WARNING: If you have a foreign object that is embedded and you are unable to remove it, a visit to a general practitioner for assessment and treatment may be necessary.

Bug Bites and Stings

Chew up a bit of fresh plantain or mix plantain powder with a bit of water and place it on the skin. It can be especially soothing to mix some essential oils in with your poultice. For itching, try peppermint essential oil, and for bites and stings try lavender essential oil. Cover with a bandage just to keep the poultice in place. My children have been repeatedly stung by yellow jackets, one of the more painful stings, this fall; a plantain poultice has quickly removed the pain and prevented any lingering redness or itching every time.

If you get bitten by something with stronger venom like a snake or spider you'll want to drink plantain tea while you treat topically. A year ago my father was bitten by a pretty dangerous spider, and his elbow swelled up unnaturally. By the time my mother called me the next day, the bite had begun to fester. Luckily we had quite a bit of dried plantain and could also access some fresh from the yard. They began to poultice the bite throughout the next few days while he drank plantain tea that we spiked with an antibiotic tincture. Within a few days the swelling went down, and the flesh at the center of the bite stopped dying. The small wound eventually scabbed over, and he came out of the incident with just a small scar.

If you are using a powdered poultice, allow the powder to dry completely and then rinse off with cool water. If you are still experiencing the problem, apply a new one and repeat.

NOTE: If you or a loved one is bitten by a poisonous spider or snake, seek medical attention immediately.

Alternatives for external application: comfrey, echinacea, green clay, yarrow

Sprains/Strains

- Elder Leaves
- Plantain
- Yarrow

One of the worst sprains I ever sustained was healed rather quickly with a fresh yarrow poultice. Since then, I've been a big fan of this plant. These days I also recommend plantain or elder leaves in much the same way. Any of the listed plants can be used as a poultice or compress on a sprain or strain. You might also choose to soak the injured area in an herbal tea bath. It is said that you may wish you had a broken bone instead of a sprain. It's true that a sprain can be very painful. Any topical treatment for swelling and bruising should be followed with an internal one for pain. This is where the pain tincture in your medicine cabinet can come in handy.

The affected body part should be elevated during treatment with the application of cold packs for the first hour, alternating 15 minutes on and 15 minutes off. After the first hour you may alternate hot and cold packs. Be sure to refrain from using the affected area for a day or so or until the swelling has subsided and the area no longer hurts.

Alternatives: arnica — homeopathic or external — on unbroken skin only (*Arnica montana*)

Toothache

- Boneset
- Echinacea
- Plantain

A toothache can be a symptom of another problem or the result of an injury. If you have a toothache as a result of an injury to the mouth or you have a broken tooth it is important that it be assessed by a dental professional.

Often, it is our diet that causes sensitivity in our teeth. If diet is the problem, it can also be the solution. Too much sugar and acidity in the body combined with too little nutrition weakens the enamel in our teeth. Decay can start, or we can simply experience sensitivity and achiness. The challenge with altering our diet to heal our teeth is that it takes hard work and patience. A strict focus on calcium and magnesium, vitamins A, D and C and gelatin is essential. A resolution to remove every last bit of refined flour and sugar from the diet can be difficult but rewarding. While waiting for the diet to take effect, there are a few herbs that can help.

Echinacea and boneset can be used on their own or together as a mouthwash three times a day. You can make a tincture to use as a mouthwash or you may just make a tea. It will depend on whether you mind the alcohol component of the tincture and if you would rather have it last longer. The tea will need to be stored in the refrigerator and made fresh all the time. I have found that drinking boneset tea three times a day for a couple days will often clear up any sensitivities I may be having with my teeth or gums.

If there is an abscess, or if something has become stuck under the gumline, a toothache is the inevitable result. A plantain poultice can be applied directly on the affected area by chewing a fresh or dried leaf and holding the plant in place. This type of treatment can pull out food or infection. Remember that you must change the poultice often for as long as you need to treat.

Alternatives for internal topical application: calendula, clove essential oil, myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), spilanthes (*Spilanthes acmella*)

Urinary Tract Infection

- Parsley
- Plantain
- Yarrow
- Wild Bergamot

If you’ve ever had a urinary tract infection, you’d know the symptoms immediately — hot urine, pain upon urination, blood in the urine or the urgent need to urinate but the inability to completely do so. It is a very

miserable situation that calls for immediate relief. If you have a tendency to get these infections, be aware that you can have an issue even without symptoms. If you just don't feel right and you have cloudy urine, this could indicate that there is an infection.

Urinary tract infections react beautifully to one or a combination of the tinctured herbs above. The very first one to try in this list is parsley. The tincture needs to be taken in an acute fashion, every 15–20 minutes until symptoms subside.

To support your choice of herbs, it is also important to alkalinize your system. This means that you must refrain from refined sugars and flours. It is also important to drink as much non-caffeinated, non-sugary liquid as possible. People who are suffering from a urinary tract infection are told to drink cranberry juice. This can be very helpful, but it must be real cranberry juice, not sugary cranberry cocktail.

Symptoms from this type of infection should subside within a few hours. If you are not feeling relief with the herb treatment you have chosen, it is a good idea to seek the advice of a professional physician.

Alternatives for internal application: cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*), hops, sage, uva ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Wounds

See also Bleeding.

- Calendula
- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- Plantain

One of the most terrifying things that have happened to me so far, as a mother, was when my one-year-old fell face first onto our stone hearth. It was a true test of my determination to care for our health needs on our own at home. It is not an easy thing to take on that kind of responsibility. When I saw the gash on my daughter's forehead, I wanted nothing more than to pass her off to someone else to be fixed while I indulged in the luxury of falling apart. My husband's cooler head prevailed. He took one look at the

bleeding and asked me what he needed to pick from the garden. I asked for yarrow and comfrey.

After controlling the bleeding, I could get a better look at the wound. If you are undertaking home care you will need to assess each wound individually. You must quickly ascertain whether or not the wound requires stitching. You also need to get a good read on whether or not you can effectively clean it on your own. Finally, with a head injury you must also understand there may be a risk of concussion.

In the case of my daughter, there was nothing in the wound that needed to be cleaned out. The wound had not been made by a cutting action, rather it was more of a scooping that had removed a chunk of skin. This was important, because we could see that to pull the edges of the skin together for a stitch would have caused more scarring than allowing it to heal as it was. We now had to weigh the emotional damage that it would do a very small child to take her into an emergency room and have her poked and prodded, and the exposure we would all have to the germs of a hospital if we took her in. In our case, had we seen more benefit to having a doctor fix the problem that's where we would have headed. With the information we had, we proceeded on our own. Her pupils were reacting normally and equally on both sides (this can be checked in a dim room with a small flashlight, passing the light quickly over each eye). We watched her for the next few hours for any lethargy and just to be sure, when she fell asleep we checked to see if she could be roused easily. This is not usually advisable or fun with a very young child, but nonetheless necessary to be sure there has been no concussion.

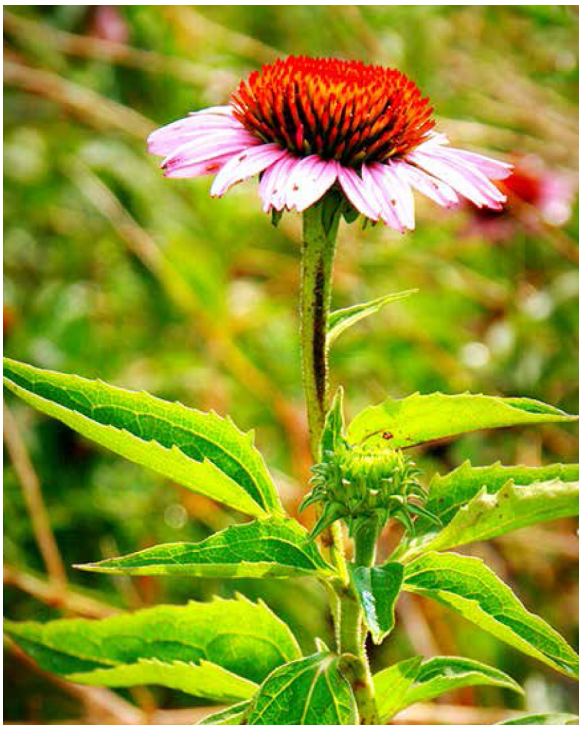
I combined a dab of honey with a crushed, fresh comfrey leaf and placed it directly on the wound. I then covered this poultice with a bandage. Before I had even finished patching her up, my daughter was ready to get on to other things. She was over the injury and wasn't bothered by it because we hadn't made much of it (outwardly at least). We monitored the progress of the wound as it healed, ensuring that there was no redness or seeping. We watched her behavior to ensure there was no fever or lethargy. Each day I applied a fresh comfrey leaf along with a dab of honey. Within two to three days we stopped treating the wound and left it open to the air so that the emerging scab could form properly. In the end, she was left with a small, light scar that is virtually invisible.

Traumatic wounds can truly test your resolve to be health sufficient. They require serious assessment and careful monitoring. If the wound does not hold together, will not heal, gets red, produces pus or the affected person develops a fever or begins to get ill, it is time to seek help from a medical professional.

Alternatives for external application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), chickweed, elder, fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), garlic, goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*), St. John's wort, self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)

Part V:

Illnesses and Imbalances



EVERY FAMILY HAS LONG-TERM ILLNESS AND IMBALANCE that they must be prepared to treat. In each of these situations there are aspects that require first aid care, but understanding the illness as a whole can help provide a continuity of care that would otherwise be lost if we were to move only from symptom to symptom.

The following illnesses are loosely grouped by body system. We have found that this is the easiest way to find information when someone needs to be treated. Over the years we have treated our family and friends for many of the maladies listed. It is good to finally have them on paper for easy reference as we cannot always trust our memory or have time to comb through multiple books in the library.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The respiratory system is part of our body's filtration design. It is responsible for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide as well as the expulsion of waste and toxicity. The respiratory system is a prime target for disease and dysfunction because it is especially vulnerable to attack. It also comes up with some great defense mechanisms, such as the production of mucus. Some of these defense mechanisms can be problematic on their own, but the strategies are a little different when we understand that they are not the problem but instead the solution. Often simple treatment involves assisting the body in doing what comes naturally. This means we help to move out mucus that has trapped bacteria and infection and shore up overall health with respiratory tonics. For overall health in this system, it is important to seek out places with clean air whenever possible. Sit and stand correctly and be sure to breathe deeply.

Rosemary Gladstar's Fire Cider

Since time immemorial people have known about the benefits of honey and vinegar and have used tonics founded on those ingredients to maintain health and to heal illness. Sometime in the early 1960s Rosemary Gladstar captured this knowledge in a recipe that was to become known as Fire Cider. Many herbalists have continued to make this recipe ever since. No one owns the right to make this health tonic. It belongs to everyone and no one all at once. It is medicine of the people, by the people and for the people. Here is the basic recipe so you can share it with your family. Rosemary always encourages her students to play with her recipes, I hope you feel free to add to this recipe and be as creative as you would like. Some have even added fruit!

¼ cup horseradish; freshly grated
⅛ cup garlic; chopped
½ cup onion; chopped
¼ cup ginger; freshly grated
Cayenne to taste
Honey to taste
Apple cider vinegar

Grate and chop all the ingredients. Place them in a glass jar and just cover everything with vinegar. Let this sit for four weeks. Strain. Sweeten to taste with honey. Take one teaspoon (just try and stop there!) every half hour, once a day as a tonic, or as often as desired.

Because this system tends to react by creating mucus, it is important to avoid foods that encourage that mechanism. It is not necessarily the food that is causing mucus, but the resulting inflammation in the body causing it to create mucus in response. When there is an imbalance in the respiratory system special attention must be given to foods that are clean, easy to digest and not allergenic. This is why chicken soup is such a popular remedy for the cold. One of the best tonics for the respiratory system is Rosemary Gladstar's recipe for fire cider. It is easy to make and should be on your shelf at all times, especially as a shot of prevention or remedy during cold and flu season. Those with chronic respiratory weakness should shore up their bodies with respiratory tonic herbs and avoid things like refined grains and sugars, dairy, nuts and sometimes eggs.

Allergies

- Elder
- Garlic
- Mullein
- Parsley
- Yarrow

When I was a kid there were only a few kids in my class with allergies. Today it seems as though everyone struggles with sensitivity to something in their environment. I've heard it explained that our diagnostics have advanced, and we are simply better able to diagnose these problems. I've also heard it said that our environment has become toxic to such an extent that the increase in allergies is an obvious result. I think there is a grain of truth in both arguments, but I believe something else is going on.

When something is identified as foreign by the body, it stimulates the body's defenses. The liver is the chief of this brigade and is responsible for producing histaminase (natural antihistamine) to control the inflammation and deactivate the histamine that is produced in our blood during the battle. The liver is our master detoxifier, tasked with cleaning our blood of foreign proteins before we have a chance to react to them. Unfortunately, the environment in which many of us find ourselves is polluted and begins to put stress on our overtaxed livers. It doesn't stop there though. We tend to

eat quite a bit of things that aren't really food, and when we aren't eating plastic, dyes and wood, we ingest a fair amount of chemical residue. The more of this type of gunk goes in, the more our liver must work to sort the good and the bad. When the liver becomes clogged with the bad or stressed out from all the work, it stops sorting. This is the point where a large proportion of us live our lives. When the liver stops sorting proteins out of our blood as part of the digestion process we begin to note increasing allergies as the body reacts to seemingly new invaders.

Once the body begins to overreact to something in the air or in our food, it becomes highly sensitized and we need to find a way to calm the irritation and support the liver in its bid to sort and to produce antihistamine. This can be done with herbs that contain natural antihistamines, those that are considered alteratives and those that assist in proper digestion. Yarrow and mullein would be especially useful in managing symptoms of congestion. Don't forget that as you work on an issue from the chronic level, you also want to address the acute symptoms. Doing things the right way is always best, but quality of life must be maintained while you do that! These herbs are all used internally in tea, tincture, pill or food form. Honey and raw pollen have long been touted for helping with allergies. This is absolutely true, but they are mainly helpful with pollen allergies as a sort of innoculation against the things that your body usually has trouble processing. The honey must be raw and local, and it must be harvested in the season that your pollen allergy occurs. In other words, if you have a fall allergy to ragweed, you won't get much help using a spring honey that only contains maple pollen and nectar.

One of the great things we can do for the allergy process is to ramp up our nutrition levels. Herbs and foods that are high in vitamins A, E and B as well as the minerals zinc and magnesium are especially helpful to prevent and relieve an allergy outbreak. Alkalinizing foods such as dark green leafy vegetables, sprouts, soaked whole grains and seeds and fresh fruits such as lemons and grapefruits are very important therapeutically. It is further important to include soured and fermented dairy such as kefir, yogurt and buttermilk. Just as important are the foods you should avoid: fried foods, alcohol, food additives, high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), hydrogenated oils, chemically sprayed foods and refined sugars and flours.

Alternatives for internal application: dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinale*), ephedra (*Ephedra sinica*), eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), honey, nettle (*Urtica dioica*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)

Asthma

- Calendula
- Chickweed
- Garlic
- Lemon Balm
- Lobelia
- Mullein
- Parsley
- St. John's Wort

Asthma is ultimately a constriction of the airways due to irritation and inflammation. As a syndrome or defined disease it has been studied all the way back to ancient Egypt, but still today we don't really understand why someone is born with this problem. The person who suffers from asthma will have "triggers" which set off wheezing, chest tightness, panic and feelings of suffocation. These episodes often occur in response to an allergen so it is, of course, helpful to treat the person as you would if they had basic allergy issues. The severity of the attacks will dictate how you prepare a home health kit. If the person in your household with asthma tends to have serious attacks that deprive them of oxygen and require emergency treatment, it is important to have a lobelia tincture within easy reach at all times. It may be helpful to label that tincture "in case of asthma attack" or something else in plain English rather than "lobelia tincture." In the case of a serious situation like this, it is important to remember that you don't know who may reach into your medicine cabinet. If your child has asthma, you may be away at work and their friends may be at home with them when there is an emergency. Make this type of first aid product really easy to understand by anyone.

Beyond the emergency situation, a wholistic family caregiver is going to want to know what to do to prevent or heal the dysfunction. In the case of

asthma, it can be helpful to build the health of the respiratory system internally with herbs such as mullein, calendula and garlic. Nervines are important in a treatment protocol because some of the triggers for an asthma attack can be emotional or stress related, causing constriction in the muscles around the airways. Lemon balm and St. John's wort in teas, pills or tinctures are perfect for this type of work and have been used specifically for asthma related issues successfully. Diuretics and alteratives affect the way that toxins are carried out of the body and proteins are cleansed from the blood. This, of course, keeps the allergic trigger down to a minimum; parsley and chickweed are effective when used in this way.

Personally, I think the answer to asthma may lie in adrenal health. Two of the most common medications for asthma are synthetic forms of the norepinephrine and corticosteroids that are produced in the adrenal glands. It seems that there may be a fight or flight dysfunction that is causing the lungs to react inappropriately to external stimuli. I haven't found any research to back up this hunch of mine, but in the meantime, I will continue to recommend that those treating asthma symptoms add adrenal tonics to their treatment programs.

Alternatives for internal application: black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), elecampane (*Inula helenium*), ephedra (*Ephedra sinica*), wild cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Bronchitis

- Calendula
- Chickweed
- Echinacea
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Hops
- Licorice
- Lobelia
- Mullein
- Plantain

- St. John’s Wort
- Yarrow

Bronchitis is an inflammation of the mucous membranes of the bronchi that develops secondarily after a cold or respiratory infection. It can be caused by bacteria or a virus. It is therefore helpful to have many different herbs in your cupboard that are antibacterial and antiviral but also have the ability to support respiratory health.

Bronchitis that tends to go on and on is called chronic bronchitis and is usually brought on by exposure to an environmental toxin, chemical pollutant or smoking. This type of bronchitis will benefit from some of the respiratory herbs above but not so much from the antivirals and antibacterials. It is important to eliminate exposure to the cause of chronic bronchitis and then strive to help the body expel those toxins. See Toxins / Detox for more.

With acute bronchitis, there is usually a cough that is attempting to bring up congestion. Herbs that are considered to be expectorants, those that help to expel mucus, are especially helpful. Most of the herbs in the list above are helpful in this manner. These herbs are used internally in tea, tincture or pill form, though I recommend hot teas for this specific illness as the form of treatment becomes a therapy in itself. Hops, mullein and plantain are especially helpful because they are also demulcent: they tend to soothe and protect the mucous membranes.

Externally you may choose to apply yarrow, garlic or ginger in the form of a poultice, compress or salve to break up and move out congestion.

With bronchitis, there tend to be other symptoms such as headache, sore throat and fever that should be dealt with as directed in each of those sections. The main thing here is that you don’t want the infection to fester. Most cases of bronchitis will resolve on their own after about three weeks, but those that aren’t cared for appropriately may linger and become something more serious like pneumonia.

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), anise seed (*Pimpinella anisum*), balm of gilead (*Populus balsamifera*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), elecampane (*Inula helenium*), ephedra (*Ephedra sinica*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-*

graecum), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), horseradish, hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), Irish moss (*Chondrus crispus*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*)

Common Cold

- Echinacea
- Elder (flower and berry)
- Garlic
- Lobelia
- Mullein
- Parsley
- Plantain
- Yarrow

The common cold is a hot button topic among medical doctors. This nuisance illness has captured the imagination of every physician and flim-flam artist alike, chasing an ever-elusive “cure.” There is a relatively small chance of a cold becoming a serious situation. It is, at most, an indication that we have pushed ourselves too far and weakened our system. When the respiratory system is weakened, it is open to bacteria and viruses. Colds are the body’s way of enforcing what is both prevention and cure: rest.

The diet during a cold should be warming, light and nourishing. Herbs such as ginger, cayenne and garlic should be incorporated into food as often as possible. Elimination of foods that encourage phlegm production, and thereby congestion, is important. These include milk products, vegetables in the nightshade family, refined sugars and orange juice.

Cure for the Common Cold Chicken Soup

1. Bake a chicken.
2. Pick off the meat and store in the refrigerator.
3. Place the bones in a large crockpot with a carrot, some celery and a quartered and unpeeled onion. Cover all with water. For every gallon of water add ¼ cup of apple cider vinegar. Turn the crockpot on low and let simmer 24 hours.
4. Strain out the bones. You may now choose to make another batch of bone broth with the same bones up to two more times.

5.Steps 1–4 can be completed ahead of time and the ingredients stored in the freezer. Be sure to label!
6.Assemble soup ingredients:

1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 knuckle of ginger, peeled and minced
2–3 celery stalks sliced
2 tablespoons fresh sage (2 teaspoons dried sage)
2–3 carrots sliced
Butter
2–3 cloves of garlic plus 1 clove per bowl added after cooking
2 quarts chicken bone broth
Half of a small head of cabbage, finely sliced
2 handfuls fresh plantain, sliced into ribbons
3 cups reserved, diced chicken meat
1 tablespoon per bowl chopped fresh parsley as an edible garnish

Saute the onion, ginger, celery, sage and carrots in enough butter to coat the bottom of your soup pot until the onion is clear. Mince or press two to three cloves of garlic. Add to the pot, stirring just long enough to heat it. Add your bone broth, cabbage and plantain. If you do not have fresh plantain you may add dried directly to the pot or drop it in contained within a muslin bag. Cook for about half an hour on low. Add chicken and cook for another half an hour. Ladle into warm bowls. Into each bowl stir one pressed clove of garlic and top with a generous pinch of freshly chopped parsley. Enjoy.

Symptom management can be done in a variety of ways.

To shorten the duration of a cold and fight the infection: echinacea, elder, garlic and ginger can be used in teas, tinctures, pills or food.

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), linden (*Tilia × europaea*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*)

To ease a cough: garlic, licorice root, mullein, plantain or chickweed. The most common way to soothe a cough is to make a syrup. These herbs can be used in a tincture or tea as well, and you may find success depending on the type of cough. If you really need the throat coated to help with a ticklish cough, the best thing will be a syrup.

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), anise seed (*Pimpinella anisum*), balm of gilead (*Populus balsamifera*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), comfrey (*Symphytum*

spp.), elecampane (*Inula helenium*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), pine (*Pinus* spp.), pleurisy root (*Asclepias tuberosa*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), violet (*Viola odorata*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*)

To relieve congestion: At times during a cold it can be difficult to determine which symptom is the most annoying. Congestion in the chest or head can be truly miserable, but armed with the right herbs there are many things that can be done.

> Steams: minced or pressed garlic added to a steam is a perfect antibacterial treatment that opens up and drains congestion.
> Topical: Try rubbing garlic oil on the chest or sinuses, honey on the sinuses, or a poultice, compress, salve or liniment on the chest made of comfrey, ginger or yarrow.

Internally, you may use a tea or syrup of mullein, lobelia or elder either singly or in combination to break up even the most stubborn congestion in either the lungs or sinus cavities.

Alternatives for internal application: coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), horseradish

Alternative for external application: cayenne, comfrey, mustard powder

Influenza

- Boneset
- Cayenne
- Echinacea
- Elder
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Lemon Balm
- Sage
- Yarrow

The difference between a cold and the flu is judged on severity and by lab culture. A cold does not typically progress to more serious ailments such as pneumonia, but influenza will.

The flu often starts with feeling achy and cold, sometimes there is a fever. As it progresses, usually the experience changes to high fever and chills. The virus builds up steam and moves into the lungs and sinuses to attach to mucous membrane cells by using a type of glue called hemagglutinin. Coughing, body ache, fatigue, headache and nose, eye and throat irritation typically follow in the next stage. Diarrhea, abdominal pain and vomiting may occur.

The virus actually has been in the body three days before symptoms appear, and by then it is established. In a normal flu it will take about five to seven days to run its course. The higher the fever, the more infectious particles are shed in coughing and sneezing.

Ginger is a hemagglutinin inhibitor; it prevents the influenza virus from being able to stick to the cell. Ginger is our first line of defense along with copious amounts of onions and garlic sauteed with cayenne.

If the virus manages to stick, it will next use neuraminidase to open the door and invite itself into our cells. Once inside it can hide from the immune system. Elder, licorice and ginger are all neuraminidase inhibitors.

Licorice interacts with the production mechanism involved with type I interferon and can reduce the severity of the infection. Licorice, elder and zinc increase T cell counts and can reduce the severity of the infection.

Elder, ginger, licorice and boneset all help counter the negative effects that can occur in a cytokine cascade by reducing inflammation, minimizing spread and alleviating symptoms.

In pandemics (such as the 1918 flu epidemic), those with seemingly healthy immune systems were more likely to succumb. This was because cytokine cascades turned to cytokine storms. These storms are when the body’s healthy, natural defense mechanism of inflammation gets turned against itself and goes out of control. If a cytokine storm is allowed to reach its conclusion the alveoli in the lungs swell with fluid, reducing or choking off the oxygen exchange for the blood, and finally hemorrhage. Those that died in the 1918 epidemic tended to die with bloody froth in their mouths. They drowned.

It is worth mentioning that the herb that was noted by the eclectics, at the time of the 1918 epidemic, to have been the most successful in healing patients was boneset.

Licorice suppresses a specific type of cytokine that tends to cause lung damage. When this particular cytokine gets fired up, the damage gets bad enough to cause sepsis in the rest of the body leading to organ damage and death. Pharmaceutical antivirals, antibiotics and corticosteroids have all been found to be ineffective; this is why the viral researchers are so scared of flu mutation.

Medical treatment is all over the place. If you see a responsible physician they will tell you to rest and keep hydrated. Some doctors prescribe antibiotics that are, at best, useless against the flu virus. If your infection is more serious and you land in the hospital, there are a few drug protocols that are followed. Most of what is available is rapidly becoming ineffective because the flu viruses are developing resistance to them due to their overuse in agriculture.

In this house, we keep a tincture of licorice, elder and boneset in the cupboard to administer at the first sign of infection along with a steady dose of fresh ginger tea. The other herbs listed can also be used internally as they have been found to have activity against some form of the flu virus. They may also be helpful in working to relieve symptoms. For more information on how to relieve individual symptoms, return to the Common Cold section.

Year-round we support our immune systems with whole foods and whole plants, and we keep toxins to a minimum. For us, that includes the flu vaccine. I may have just convinced you to get one with the description of the 1918 pandemic. Unfortunately, each year the vaccine is a guess based on the best evidence available as to which flu strain will pop up. Influenza is a very smart virus that continues to learn from the human, and animal hosts it uses. We are helping that mutation along with the crowded agricultural conditions that are used to raise pigs and chickens — the two animal hosts of choice. The result is that the commercial flu vaccine is a gamble you must decide if you’re willing to take. Be prepared. The flu is generally no big deal. When it eventually does mutate into a very dangerous pandemic, we will be prepared to deal with the fallout in our home.[1]

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), green tea, goldenseal (*Hydrastis candensis*), horseradish, linden (*Tilia × europaea*), mustard (*Brassica hirta*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), pleurisy root (*Asclepias tuberosa*), spilanthes (*Spilanthes acmella*), white poplar (*Populus tremuloides*)

Pneumonia

- Elder
- Ginger
- Hops
- Lobelia
- Mullein
- Plantain
- Yarrow

I had pneumonia as a kid. At the time, my doctor was a terrifying man with the bedside manner of an iceberg. My mother trusted him implicitly, and with a more mature perspective, I now have to agree with her. His treatment of my pneumonia was mainly to rest and stay indoors.

This respiratory ailment can be serious in the very young and the very old or infirm. However, in most people it is a self-limiting sickness brought on either by bacterial or viral infection. There are specific protocols for diagnosis, but basically (along with similar symptoms of other respiratory infections) the cough tends to be harder, the chest crackles and there is chest pain. Most of the time a doctor will not even worry about identifying the cause of your pneumonia unless there is a serious outbreak in your community that they want to monitor from a larger perspective.

From a medical standpoint, once you have pneumonia, the treatment involves oral antibiotics, pain medicine and fluids. From an herbal viewpoint there would be much the same focus. Ginger is a primary here, providing an antibacterial and antiviral double whammy along with decongestion and fever management. Small amounts of lobelia in formula with elder and mullein can help control the cough. All of the herbs can be used internally as a tea, tincture or pill including hops to help alleviate pain.

Plantain and yarrow may be used in a poultice, compress or salve to move congestion out of the chest.

My doctor kept me indoors and away from school much longer than any of my fellow classmates who got pneumonia that year. I had long since begun to climb the walls and annoy my mother, but that extra time gave my body a chance to fully recover and gain strength. So many people return to the outdoors or to close proximity with other people and their germs too early, and as a result they are often exposed to another pathogen while the body is still weakened. Most of my classmates had pneumonia again within a year while I have never had another bout.

Alternatives for internal application: pleurisy root (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Alternatives for external application: onion

Sinusitis

- Elder (berry)
- Garlic
- Mullein
- Yarrow

Here in Ohio it seems like our family and friends are frequently suffering from infection of the sinuses. This issue can be of viral, bacterial and very rarely fungal origin and can occur as the result of an upper respiratory infection or allergy. The symptoms include face pain in the sinus areas, headache, green mucus, congestion, dizziness, toothache, earache, bad breath and pressure behind the eyes. The solution to this often chronic problem requires a multifaceted approach. Using herbs both internally as well as externally will provide the best relief.

I like to use tea, tincture or pills of antimicrobial garlic and elder in combination with mullein and yarrow to clear congestion. You may also choose to use mullein and yarrow in a salve for the chest or sinus areas to relieve congestion. One of my favorite tricks for sinus pain and congestion I learned from my mentor, Rosemary Gladstar. Spreading raw honey over the sinus areas in a thin coat will make you very sticky, but you should also have your tissues ready because your sinuses will begin draining rather quickly.

While I am working on the internal situation I usually treat myself, or my family member, to a steam two to three times a day. This steam can include any kind of herb that is high in volatile oils and is antimicrobial, or you can just use a couple of drops of an appropriate essential oil. I like eucalyptus or rosemary essential oil best.

For many, the neti pot is the go-to therapy for sinus trouble. I will caution you that the neti pot is only for dry infections or periodic cleansing. We had a family member use a neti pot during an active infection when he had congestion. The neti pot liquid went up, but it did not come back down. Even if you have wonderful herbs mixed in to your neti pot this is a bad situation. The pressure alone of adding more liquid to your sinuses will cause pain and suffering, but trapped liquid is also ripe to become a breeding ground for bacteria. Do yourself a favor: always be sure to add a pinch of salinity to your neti pot formulations, use only distilled water and *never* do a neti pot when there is a chance that you'll have trouble getting your neti tea back out!

During sinusitis outbreaks, it helps to cut mucus forming foods such as milk, refined flours and sugars. Stay hydrated. Anytime there is a condition involving mucus, you are better off to drink plenty of non-caffeinated or non-sugary liquids to thin things out and reduce congestion. If sinusitis is a frequent problem, then it may be worth the time to keep a food journal so you can uncover a possible food allergy.

Alternatives for internal application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), pine (*Pinus* spp.), pokeroot (*Phytolacca americana*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*)

NERVOUS SYSTEM

The nervous system controls the way in which we respond to our environment. We can damage it by swallowing our emotions or wallowing in them. We can create imbalances in every other body system by irritating and overworking the nerve centers throughout the body. Of course elements of lifestyle can affect the vibrant health that we should have from a properly functioning nervous system. Proper diet is critical — in particular fats, good protein, calcium and the complete B complex of vitamins. When we forget to feed our brain, it ceases to function correctly for us, and we experience misfires in the system. Some of the worst of our degenerative diseases (Parkinson's, dementia, Alzheimer's) have their roots in a nervous system that is simply starving for nutrition. We can go a long way toward mediating many illnesses that attack the nervous system with diet, but luckily we also have a class of herbs called *nervines* that support us as well. Nervines should be considered in any other disease of the body, no matter how much it seems to be unrelated.

Anxiety/Stress

- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- St. John's Wort
- Wild Bergamot

After my children were born I watched for postpartum depression. I never exhibited the signs, but I still struggled mightily. I didn't know until I was in the thick of it that there was such a thing as postpartum anxiety. Once there, I needed to find my way out of it.

Granted, my experience with anxiety had added hormonal stress that others suffering from the condition don't have, but the treatment is the same. I focused on nervine teas during the day in chronic, ongoing dosages and at night when my attacks would happen I used more fast-acting tinctures in small, closely spaced doses. I talked to friends and family about

my thought life and that helped a lot. You lose perspective when you are highly anxious and spending time alone.

Beyond the herbs that I used, I also found my diet to be lacking. The calcium and magnesium pairing is often low in a person who is anxious or stressed out. It's hard to say which comes first, the deficiency or the behavior. I suppose it doesn't really matter; it is a self-perpetuating loop. The demand on the system while you are anxious further depletes nutrition, and the lack of nutrition breeds the behavior. I supplemented with high vitamin, nutritive teas, a whole foods supplement, spirulina and whole foods such as dark green leafy vegetables.

After a few weeks of working with this protocol I began to feel calmer. I added in exercise and began to feel like myself again.

Alternatives for internal application: ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), kava kava (*Piper methysticum*), linden (*Tilia* × *europaea*), motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*), oats (*Avena sativa*), passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), wood betony (*Stachys officinalis*)

Depression

- Lemon Balm
- St. John's Wort

Depression is a difficult situation for which to suggest just one therapy, food or herb. There are so many reasons why someone becomes afflicted with this particular nervous system imbalance. Thoughts of harming oneself or others should never be taken lightly or dealt with alone. Here is the very definition of a disease that is not synonymous with self-sufficiency. Depression can be handled in a self-care way, but it must be done in community. It is imperative that anyone attempting to work on their own mental health have a supportive team around them who are maintaining contact at all times. Unfortunately, depression can cause ideas that are not based in reality to seem reasonable. It is important to be surrounded by

others who can verify that your perceptions are credible until you are on more stable footing. There also needs to be a commitment that professional help will be sought at any time that the situation becomes dangerous for anyone involved.

The nervines listed under Anxiety/Stress can go a long way to supporting health in the nervous system and providing room for an individual to do the work needed to overcome depression. They are not cures. They do not mask problems or numb pain. They simply give the nervous system a chance to be soothed, fed and cared for. Depression is a condition for which I highly recommend the use of flower essences.

Diet is incredibly important for anyone suffering with depression. The B complex of vitamins is greatly involved in helping us to feel good. It is important that B vitamins be augmented with a whole foods supplement or whole food only. Vitamin A, found in supplements such as fermented cod liver oil, can be especially helpful as proper levels will allow for the absorption of B vitamins. It is essential that a depressed person get appropriate fats such as coconut oil, butter and nuts to feed the brain. Finally, the general recommendations in the section on healthy digestion should be followed.

Alcohol should be strictly avoided. Nutrition can play a huge role with depression, and at the very least the goal should be to get the digestive system absorbing proper nutrition at its peak. Never assume that you are covered nutritionally because you are taking supplements. If your digestion isn't working properly, all the good nutrition in the world will only pass through without benefiting any of your body's systems.

Alternatives for internal application: celery seed (*Apium graveolens*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), oats (*Avena sativa*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Fibromyalgia

- Garlic
- Ginger

- Hops
- Licorice
- St. John’s Wort

Fibromyalgia is a disorder that has been highly debated over the past several years. In most medical circles it has gained acceptance as a syndrome and has therefore begun to garner the development of diagnostic criteria. To the general public, the syndrome is known to cause widespread, unexplained pain. We are coming to understand that there is more to fibromyalgia than just the mismanagement of the pain experience. Those who suffer with fibromyalgia may experience sleep disturbances, fatigue, digestive problems affecting the bowels, tingling or numbness in the extremities, menstrual dysfunction and difficulty maintaining mental focus.

There is no consensus as to what causes fibromyalgia. To date, most of the methods of treatment involve symptom remediation and little else. It is obvious that there is an involvement with the nervous system. For years there has been a not-so-subtle implication that the syndrome is all mental, and many people are prescribed psych medications in response to a diagnosis of fibromyalgia. This seems logical to some practitioners because there is often depression and anxiety accompanying the more well-known symptoms. My own hypothesis is that fibromyalgia arises from an impaired digestion originating in, or complicated by, dysfunction in the adrenal glands. There is some research to support this.[2]

The experience of pain is difficult to quantify. Everyone has a different threshold of tolerance. In fibromyalgia the ability to withstand pain decreases. One of the treatments, then, definitely needs to be pain relief. Both hops and St. John’s wort are excellent pain relievers. St. John’s wort is quite possibly a specific here in that it targets the nerve endings and is especially helpful where there is extreme pain in areas of high nerve concentration. Both herbs are nervines so they are tonics for the nervous system. For general pain, these herbs may be all that is needed.

My recommendations to friends and customers is that after they manage pain, they need to get to work on supporting their liver to flush toxicity (ginger and garlic), improve and repopulate the digestive system (ginger

and garlic), tone the nervous system and improve the health of their adrenal glands (licorice root).

Diet often plays a key role in fibromyalgia, and it is worth keeping an eye on the foods that cause flare-ups of pain, inflammation and joint stiffness. The same foods that can set off an arthritis attack such as nuts, glutenous grains, plants in the *Solanacaea* family, refined sugars and flours, caffeine and chocolate can cause fibromyalgia to flare up as well.

Internal alternatives for general pain: black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), black willow (*Salix nigra*), crampbark (*Viburnum trilobum*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*)

Insomnia

- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- Mullein
- Sage
- St. John's Wort

Sleep problems and their causes are as varied as the number of people who have them. Too many people are on sleep medication that is addictive. Those that are doing natural options often talk to me about melatonin. That's a better option, but sadly it is still a synthetic hormone. Anytime you introduce a hormone from outside the body, it can throw your system into distress.

It is much better to address sleep problems from the bottom up. Usually there is a disturbance in the nervous system. Hops are just about my favorite sedative for sleep problems. They are universally gentle and effective for just about any body. Lemon balm, mullein and St. John's wort are also soothing nervines that can support the body's ability to calm down in preparation for sleep. Sage is a specific for sleep disturbances that are the result of hormonal imbalances due to stress to the adrenal glands.

There is always a component of a nervous system imbalance when there is disturbance in natural sleep patterns. We make HoneyZZZ, a honey spread that is very simple and features hops. For several years now, people

have been using it to get off their sleep medicine and to get to sleep and stay asleep. Any herbal formulation that you make to address a nervous system issue like this needs to be taken in a chronic dosage throughout the day. Ever since we introduced our HoneyZZZ, people are afraid to taste it at our farmer's market table, commenting, "I don't want to go to sleep right now." Herbal sedatives simply don't work like prescription medications; they don't knock you out or put you under. Nervines are typically packed with nutrition that is specific for the nervous system, and by building and toning the system they allow the body to relax when it is appropriate.

You might make any combination of nervines into a tincture, pill or tea and use it right before bed to get to sleep or in small doses every 15 minutes to get back to sleep if you wake in the night.

Like any other imbalance, what you eat affects your ability to sleep. Calcium and vitamin C and the B complex are particularly important if you are experiencing insomnia. Sleep problems can be created by the stress in your life and the impact that can have on your adrenal glands. Coffee, chocolate, alcohol, refined sugars and flours contribute to the stress on these glands and can make the ability to sleep well difficult. Rather than applying a temporary patch, work with lifestyle, diet and herbal therapies and make a commitment to slow down and take care of yourself.

Alternatives for internal application: California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), comfrey (*Symphytum* spp.), linden (*Tilia* × *europaea*), passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*)

Memory/Brain Fog

- Lemon Balm
- Sage

Brain fog happens to the best of us, whether we are in middle or old age. A lot of times this comes on when we haven't had enough sleep, but it can also be the result of poor nutrition. Unfortunately, brain fog can often go hand in hand with depression or low energy.

Herbs can be very helpful when used often in food or as a tea, tincture or pill. This is a chronic situation through and through and should be treated as such. Sage in particular has shown some promise improving memory and mood in studies with Alzheimer's patients.[3] Lemon balm is one of my favorites for focus, and as it tastes so good it is not hard to get anyone in your family to eat or drink it as often as is required. It is tempting to ignore brain fog until we need our mental prowess for a project or long drive. Folks who do this often reach for a stimulant of some kind to address the immediate need. This may be truly necessary occasionally, so if you need to do it, reach for natural stimulants rather than over-the-counter concoctions or highly damaging coffee. If you work on long-term remedies for fogginess you can reach a healthy solution. Constant stimulation will only lead to more stress on the adrenal glands and cause the problem to recur.

Proper amounts of cholesterol in your blood contribute to overall brain health and mood. Eggs are considered brain food in many cultures (not ours, sadly) because of their combination of cholesterol and protein. Bioflavonoids, magnesium, and zinc (soaked pumpkin seeds) are part of a healthy brain diet. Copper is very important (liver, molasses, nuts and oats) as is iodine (seaweeds, unrefined sea salt, fish broth and butter). Don't eat raw spinach or cabbage as they can block the absorption of iodine and lead to memory problems among other issues. Absorption of iron depends on proper levels of Vitamin A so take cod liver oil as well. Bone broths will hit most of these requirements. Avoid refined sugars and flours, hydrogenated oils and MSG.

Alternatives for internal application: ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Migraine

- Ginger

Migraines are a specific kind of headache that can leave a person debilitated. Symptoms can include flashing lights in the vision, vertigo, chills, nausea and sweating.

While it is obvious that migraines can come about because of an imbalance in the nervous system, there is also some evidence that they can result from a food allergy or be a side effect of a hormonal imbalance. It can be helpful to keep a food journal if you experience frequent migraines. In this way you can note the days and times when migraines begin and find any patterns between when they occur and what you've eaten. For the nervous system support, it is important for general relief of pain to choose a few nervines from the headache section of this book that work well for you. They should be taken in an ongoing chronic dosage to build up their concentration in your bloodstream.

When a migraine threatens try taking ginger powder, 500–600 mg, four times a day for four days. This can be encapsulated at home or simply sprinkled over foods and added to smoothies. There is some clinical evidence that it may be helpful for some people.[4]

Be sure to follow the dietary suggestions for general headaches with the addition of an increase in magnesium intake. You can get a good whole foods supplement, increase nuts, seaweed and greens or simply soak in a bath with about a cup of magnesium flakes once a day.

Alternatives for internal application: butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*), ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

The digestive system does much more than just digest food. It is important to include digestive herbs in treating just about every other kind of illness of the body. I often advise our customers and clients that if they seem to have a laundry list of unrelated symptoms and illnesses, start working with the digestion. Often if you can get that system balanced, many of your other problems will fall away on their own. Always start here if you have multiple illnesses.

Most of the people living in the Western world have digestive problems. Our lifestyles and diets offer us little choice. We eat improper foods that suppress our digestive enzymes, we take prescriptions that deplete our ability to absorb nutrition, we ingest high amounts of dehydrating foods and we sit. Oh, do we sit; in our cars, at work and in front of the TV. We do everything to discourage a healthy digestive system.

Overall, health can return with an appropriate diet, but there are some special things to keep in mind for this system. Food should be enjoyed slowly, with friends and loved ones rather than inhaled in front of your favorite show or in the car. Chew thoroughly: this is the first stage of digestion. Don’t leave more work for the stomach than it can handle. Avoid anything more than small sips of a drink during mealtime. Downing large amounts of liquid dilutes our digestive juices and makes it more difficult to absorb nutrition and break down our food. Find a fermented food or beverage that you like and add a pinch of it at every meal. Properly fermented foods introduce living probiotics back into your system.

Include bitter tastes and/or a bitters tonic with every meal. Our body requires the bitter taste; it is hardwired into the taste receptors on our tongue, but we’ve eliminated bitterness from our standard American diet in favor of sweet. Our culture somewhere along the line decided that bitter was bad, eliminating it in what we are allowed to feel emotionally as well as from our food. Another tonic is Rosemary Gladstar’s recipe for fire cider. A shot of that in the morning can get a sluggish digestion moving and can also be used at mealtimes.

Take care of your digestion. We should eliminate waste once or twice a day, and we should easily assimilate all the good nutrition that we spend our hard earned dollars buying. If we aren't doing these things, we are not living our best, most vibrant life.

Acid Reflux

- Boneset
- Lobelia
- St. John's Wort

Acid reflux occurs when the muscle at the top of the stomach fails to operate correctly. It is designed to close after food has entered and stay shut during the process of digestion. If the muscle is weakened or there is a structural reason that prevents it from closing all the way, acid leaks up into the esophagus. This can cause heartburn as well as any number of other symptoms including burping, nausea, hiccups, a persistent cough with no obvious cause or a bitter taste in the mouth.

There are many reasons why you might get acid reflux. The biggest cause involves the position in which we eat or how we spend our time after meals. Anytime we eat while reclining, or lie down right after a meal, gravity plays havoc with that lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The second most common reason people suffer from acid reflux is sensitivity to a food or drink that causes their digestive system to act up. Being overweight, or crowding your organs due to pregnancy or because of a hiatal hernia, can also contribute to this problem. Taking aspirin, ibuprofen and some blood pressure medications are common causes of acid reflux.

In the case of hiatal hernia, there are manual therapies that you can do yourself to massage the stomach and literally pull it back down in place. Taking a few drops of lobelia tincture internally a couple of times a day has also been found to be helpful. You may also try lobelia in a salve or liniment to rub on your chest.

Acid reflux can be painful, and if left untreated it can lead to dangerous problems. It must be addressed from an acute, pain management angle first. St. John's wort is an important pain reliever that also is a specific for this problem. The oils contained within the plant are often helpful both for too

much and too little acidity in the stomach. The next step is to undertake the work required to balance digestion and eliminate triggers.

Digestive balancers, like a bitters formula or simply boneset on its own, are important supplements to get the digestive fluids working appropriately. It is important to eliminate food that may be triggering acidity, so here again is an ailment for which a food journal may be helpful. Often eating small, frequent meals may be necessary, but certainly eliminate the practice of lying down shortly after eating. If you suffer from acid reflux it can be helpful to learn how to squat rather than bending over at the waist to pick things up. Remember that gravity can work with you rather than against you when you have this condition.

Alcohol, carbonated drinks, refined sugars and flour, caffeinated and acidic foods should be avoided at all cost. A diet that focuses on properly prepared grains and vegetables is the way to go.

One further note: acid reflux can cause chest pain that does not necessarily feel like heartburn. If you are experiencing chest pain, it is always best to err on the side of caution and seek medical attention to verify that you are not having an issue with your heart.

Alternatives for internal application: aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), marshmallow root (*Althaea officinalis*), slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*)

Anemia

- Elder (berry)
- Garlic
- St. John’s Wort

Anemia can occur as the result of blood loss or an issue with red blood cells. Very simply, the body is experiencing an insufficient amount of circulating oxygen. This feels like you can’t possibly get the energy to climb out of bed. You get out of breath walking from your bedroom to your kitchen, and even the smallest daily tasks leave you feeling exhausted. In severe cases there is paleness of the skin and nail beds, confusion and loss of consciousness.

When anemia is caused by a temporary health issue it can be addressed with herbs and food. When it is due to a more serious genetic or autoimmune disorder it can be managed with herbs and food, but you must work with an experienced physician as well.

The first order of business is to improve the condition of the red blood cells and increase hemoglobin levels. The most common treatment of anemia is to take iron pills. These things are huge, often synthetic and cause problems of their own. Iron pills are the fastest way I know to become miserably constipated. When I experienced anemia, it was in the last trimester of my first pregnancy. Increasing your iron intake is helpful, but it must be done with food. I increased my intake of high quality protein, added more garlic to my diet and used a liquid chlorophyll product from the store. I really liked the product called ChlorOxygen®.

One of the most important additions to the diet of someone suffering with anemia is spirulina. This freshwater blue-green algae can be purchased in capsule, tincture or powder form.

If you do not already know why you may be anemic, it is imperative that you see a physician for diagnosis. Anemia can be due to internal bleeding; if that needs to be addressed, no amount of natural management of the problem will help you recover.

Alternatives for internal application: ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Gall Bladder Issues

- Calendula
- Parsley
- Sage

The gall bladder is a small organ located just under the right lower rib cage. It is responsible for storing and concentrating bile that has been produced by the liver until it is needed in the small intestine. This bile is stimulated by a hormone in the digestive system that, when all is working correctly, signals the need for digestion of fats.

The most common problem with the gall bladder is gallstones. Stones form as a result of excess cholesterol being produced by the liver, nutrient

deficiencies, chronic constipation and general digestion malfunction. It has been shown that proper levels of calcium, magnesium and vitamin C in the body are important in keeping the gall bladder working properly. Parsley is a valuable plant for the gall bladder because of its high nutritional profile.

When the gall bladder accumulates a number of stones, they can either be passed without notice or get stuck. It has been found that elective surgery to remove a gall bladder that has had frequent gallstone attacks is actually more dangerous than waiting for the rare situation where there is an emergency.[5] Most stones, though it is very painful, will pass on their own. Pain in the upper abdomen or on the right shoulder blade can signal a problem with the gall bladder. Other indications include nausea after eating, a persistent overly full sensation after eating or chalky colored stools.

One of the best things to do if you suspect a gallstone has become stuck is to apply a simple castor oil compress to the right side of the abdomen. The castor oil should be warmed, applied with a cotton cloth and covered with a sheet of plastic and a heating pad. Castor oil is marvelous at breaking up stones. Sipping a calendula tea or tincture in repeated small doses until symptoms pass can be extremely helpful to reduce inflammation as well as to allow the body to move the stone out.

The diet for a healthy gall bladder is rather up for debate. Most physicians insist on a fat-free diet, but I disagree. Fat is required for our body to run properly, to make hormones and to digest our food. Therefore, food must contain fat — but it must be high quality, appropriate fat. A well-balanced diet that contains plenty of fiber in the form of vegetables and fruits as well as appropriately raised meat and dairy can be healthy for the gall bladder. Adding sage into your cooking or into warm teas can help support the production of bile, improve digestion and assist in the breakdown of fats in your meals.

Refined sugar and flour are the true culprits of a gall bladder gone bad and will exacerbate any existing problems. For prevention it would be best to get the digestion fired up and working again. The body doesn’t digest our food properly when the liver and gall bladder get lazy. A good course of action then is to include a dose of bitters into your mealtime routine.

If pain is severe or lasting and if it is accompanied by ongoing constipation, diarrhea or a yellow tinge to the skin, it is imperative that you

seek immediate medical attention.

Alternatives for internal application: barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*)

Gas/Bloating

- Cayenne
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- Parsley
- Sage

There are about a million reasons why you might experience gas and/or bloating after a meal. Bloating can also mean two things: it can be associated with water retention or gas. Here we are addressing the type of bloat that is associated with gas. Sometimes these issues can signal a larger digestive system issue, so you will want to look to the other entries in this section. Sometimes they can be simple issues that are only temporary.

In simple cases of gas, you are either sensitive to one of the foods that you ate (gluten or dairy are common examples), or you have eaten something that was improperly prepared. Sensitivity to foods can cause your digestion to slow down and over time this is a perfect storm as that hard-to-digest food now enters a system that has slowed down. Gas is the logical outcome as food is no longer burnt up, but instead sits and putrefies. Keeping a food diary can help you determine if there is a pattern in your diet that consistently leaves you feeling like a blown-up balloon. Once you've identified the culprit, eliminating that food can go a long way to heading off episodes of gas. The next step is to reignite your digestion with bitters, probiotic foods and proper eating habits.

In the case where food is improperly prepared, the most common cause is beans. Beans should be soaked for 24 hours, the water drained and then they can be cooked. If they aren't prepared correctly they tend to cause the digestion to slow down inappropriately as your body attempts to break

down difficult proteins within the seedcoat. The solution here is to prepare your food correctly and keep dining out on beans (where they are not cooked traditionally) to a minimum.

It's all well and good to know the root cause of and the long-term plan for addressing gas. What you need in the moment is a way to naturally relieve the pressure and pain.

Cayenne, garlic and ginger can all be used liberally in your food to increase stomach acids and help to increase digestion time. These foods fire up your digestion. A good bitters formula is essential here as well. Hops, parsley and lemon balm can be used for their antispasmodic qualities to relieve the cramping that can accompany gas while also providing pain relief and digestive support. Lemon balm tea, especially, is often used after a large or particularly rich meal to soothe the stomach and prevent gas. As you search for your particular herb to fill this space in your apothecary, remember that any herb that is high in volatile oils will be helpful in preventing and relieving gas and bloating.

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), anise seed (*Pimpinella anisum*), blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*), calamus (*Acorus calamus*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), gentian (*Gentiana lutea*), horseradish, juniper (*Juniperus communis*), lemon juice, marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Indigestion/Poor Assimilation

- Boneset
- Ginger
- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- Wild Bergamot

Indigestion is kind of a catchall word for a slow, dysfunctional digestive system. The symptoms are all teased out individually in this section of *Heal Local*; they include gas, bloating, acid reflux, constipation and diarrhea. When our digestion slows down and lacks friendly colonies of bacteria we are in for trouble.

The herbs that are listed here are all known to be helpful internally to soothe the digestion in a general way. Chief among them are boneset and hops, which are bitter herbs. The American diet is currently lacking bitter tastes. We have plenty of salty. We get quite a lot of sour. We get too much sweet, though, and that's part of the problem. Our cultural diet has become all about emotional payoff in food: we seek the sweet or the salty far too often. We find it readily because our way of eating is governed by marketing experts that are most interested in giving people what they want to the detriment of what they need.

We *need* bitter. Our tongues have gotten so out of practice in the expression of what it means to crave the bitter taste that many of us experience this desire as a sugar craving. Using a bitters formula can actually help to curb a sweet tooth.

Most of the herbs found in a bitters formula are important for proper digestion. They are the herbs that tone and strengthen the liver and gall bladder. They ensure that there are proper levels of digestive fluids produced and processed by these organs and being made available in the stomach. We have a plague of digestive problems in our culture: malabsorption of nutrition, immune system deficiencies, behavioral maladies, skin problems — the list goes on and on. Most of this is due to a clogged liver and a lazy digestive system that is no longer producing appropriate levels of acid and digestive enzymes.

As I write this there is a trend in cocktails that is bringing back bitter ingredients. This actually makes the drink beneficial to digestion, though most mixologists are not focused on that aspect. Buying or making your own herbal bitters formula is even better. For digestive problems you would want to take a capful about 15–20 minutes before eating. It is bitter! You will feel your mouth fill with saliva in response. This is a good thing: it means the same thing is happening in your stomach. When the digestive juices are ready and waiting in your stomach you can more thoroughly digest your food.

The general recommendations on diet I've made throughout this book are a great place to start relieving and preventing indigestion. Wild bergamot is always a good addition anytime you are working to recolonize your digestive tract. Be sure to add good ferments to each meal. You might also start seeking out bitter foods for your plate; stop avoiding them. Bitter melon, the peel on that summer cucumber, dandelion greens: these are all examples of food that can readily be incorporated back into our diet to get the balance we need.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease — Colitis and Crohn's Disease

- Hops
- Mullein
- Plantain
- St. John's Wort
- Wild Bergamot
- Yarrow

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a way to classify a specific group of intestinal diseases. This group differentiates from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in that IBD affects the lining that is internal to the bowel. Colitis and ulcerative colitis affect only the colon whereas Crohn's disease can be found in patches interspersed between healthy tissues anywhere throughout the gastrointestinal system.

Just as with IBS, this group of diseases has diagnostic guidelines, but there is no general consensus as to why any of them occurs. In all of the diseases of the bowels there is a growing awareness that the digestive system has been compromised and that intestinal flora are sick or absent. Much of what I have said about general digestive health earlier in this part applies to colitis and Crohn's, but there are some additional herbal allies to introduce.

Because of the inflammatory nature, and sometimes the presence of open wounds within the bowels, it is necessary to add herbal teas, tinctures or pills that will heal and soothe these tissues. Mullein and plantain would be perfect on their own or paired together. It would be best if they were used as a tea.

With IBD, there is typically pain and cramping in the bowel; for that hops, St. John's wort and yarrow can be used quite nicely with great effect. This combination of herbs makes a nice bitters formula for gently improving the digestion in someone suffering from anything on the IBD spectrum. Yarrow has the added benefit of being able to fight and prevent infection, which is an understandable risk of open sores in the bowels.

Alternatives for internal application: barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), oak bark (*Quercus* spp.), triphala

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

- Hops

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is readily accepted and diagnosed by the medical community, but there is no real consensus about who is susceptible or why it occurs. I have seen a number of clients over the years that are suffering with this syndrome, and I have seen some commonalities.

IBS is an irritation and inflammation that tends to affect the muscle tissue of the bowels. The result is pain, bloating and often an inability to control elimination. Explosive diarrhea or chronic constipation are involved so that it can feel like you are being betrayed by your own body. Because this is a breakdown in the digestive system on a deep level, there are often other issues that act like ripples out from this initial splash in the pond. Ramifications can be felt in sleep patterns and in the circulatory, immune and endocrine systems to name a few.

I often see evidence of a marked deficiency in magnesium. I have seen a correlation between stress on the adrenal glands and digestive dysfunction such as IBS in many clients. If there is a suspicion that you have adrenal glands to support as well, you may want to add licorice root to your treatment of IBS. Overall, there is a strong correlation between the development of IBS and a lack of proper intestinal flora. This sometimes comes before, but most often after a food sensitivity has developed. When gut flora have been compromised, it can be difficult to determine whether or not someone truly has a constitutional sensitivity to a certain food or if they simply lack the bacteria that are meant to digest it.

Food journaling can often help in the case of IBS. The trouble with a disorder that affects your bowels is that you feel like you are held hostage. The helplessness of having a body part act independently of your control can make it difficult to leave the house at times. Many people with IBS learn to identify food and drink that clearly leads to an episode and begin to eliminate them at the very least when they are in public.

The biggest single thing to be done with this syndrome is to reintroduce healthy intestinal flora. Wild bergamot is a great herbal ally here. When a sufferer is at their worst, one of the best foods to build health is properly made bone broth. The minerals and gelatin that this nourishing food contains begins to heal the intestinal walls. The diet should be simple. Vegetables should be steamed or cooked and grains should be soaked or soured to make them easier to digest. Vitamin A levels are often depleted and must be supplemented only with food. Fermented cod liver oil is the best way to do that.

Much is made of store-bought probiotics. There may be some wonderful products out there, but, in my experience, they are expensive and often unnecessary. For me, I can't imagine taking in a pill what I can get in delicious food. Every meal should include a fermented food if you are hoping to regain a healthy intestinal flora. As you progress and begin to see signs of improvement, you can further increase your gut health by gardening. This doesn't just mean eating vegetables that come from someone else's garden at the farmers market. I mean get out there and get your hands in the dirt. Soak in the soil. After all, this is where our children develop some of their healthy flora as they are growing. Ever wonder why toddlers put everything in their mouths? It's a developmental stage for more than the reasons we talk about. It's also inoculating them and attuning their digestion to their environment while bringing the local bugs on board.

For those adults who find their inner populations decimated by a course of antibiotics, intense emotional or physical stress, surgery or other trauma, it can be helpful to view your own digestive system just like you would a newborn's. Don't overtax it as you build health. Think about the foods you wouldn't give a baby that is just starting to eat solid food. Choose your sources of flora wisely and populate your gut with real foods and living bacteria. In this way, you can begin to outcompete the yeast- and sickness-inducing bacteria that colonize when we lose our good communities.

Herbs that help to balance the digestion can be very helpful here, and one of my favorites is hops. This plant has a digestive component, but it is also an antispasmodic and pain reliever. Above all it is a gentle nervine, addressing the nervous system component of this complicated syndrome. You may use hops in a tea, tincture or pill. Be aware that hops are bitter, and that is part of how they help.

Alternatives for internal application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), gentian (*Gentiana lutea*), peppermint essential oil, triphala

Peptic Ulcer

- Calendula
- Elder
- Ginger
- Licorice
- Plantain
- Sage
- St. John's Wort

Peptic ulcers can technically be found in many areas of the gastrointestinal system. The most common location is in the stomach. When an ulcer is active there has been a breech in the lining of the digestive tract. Like any open wound it gets inflamed. Unfortunately, the location of an ulcer is just about the worst place for an open wound. There is a constant barrage of food and acid that serves to keep the irritation alive, and this can lead to active bleeding as well. It can be very difficult to heal a wound that is never left alone.

A peptic ulcer can be brought on by ongoing stress that increases acid production. They can also be created by habitual use of NSAIDS (aspirin or ibuprofen) or drugs like prednisone. You may display the symptoms of anemia and nothing else due to the bleeding of the ulcer. More commonly there is pain after eating, tarry stools (oxidized blood), vomiting of blood, nausea, loss of appetite and weight loss. Often eating brings relief depending on where the ulcer is located, but sometime within the next one to three hours the pain returns.

It will come as no surprise that an ulcer responds well to diet. Vegetable and bone broths should be the focus. You should avoid heavy meals of protein and fat; protein should be lean and light, think baked chicken. Vegetables should be steamed or cooked as raw vegetables are difficult to digest and will put a strain on an open wound. Meals should be small and numerous. Try five to six small meals rather than three large ones. Avoid overly spicy foods. One of the foods that get repeated over and over in natural literature in conjunction with ulcers is cabbage. It is a nutritional powerhouse that is just perfect for healing an ulcer. If you're up for it, many people swear by a white cabbage juice fast for seven days.

An appropriate herbal plan for attacking an ulcer would start with cold sage tea to dry secretions and to gently aid digestion. Calendula is a supreme skin knitter and so it can be used as a tea or tincture to help heal an ulcer. This is a time to avoid alcohol, so choose your methods of dosing wisely. If you don't really need to use an alcohol-based tincture, don't. Plantain is another skin knitter and is helpful in healing wounds. You will want to keep a pain tea or tincture close at hand, or you can simply use St. John's wort.

It is very common for stomach ulcers to be caused by an overgrowth of an organism called *Helicobacter pylori*. Part of the job, then, of bringing the digestive system back under control will be to fight off this infection. Ginger, elder berries, raw honey and licorice all have been shown to have activity against *H. pylori.*[6] You may use these remedies singly or in combination to your taste and you may consume them in food, tincture, pill or tea form.

Alternatives for internal application: calamus (*Acorus calamus*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), irish moss (*Chondrus crispus*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*)

Radiation

- St. John's Wort
- Yarrow

A few years ago the world watched as a natural disaster caused a nuclear facility in Japan to fail. There are issues of radiation in our day-to-day life, though, that don't have to do with that kind of tragedy: x-rays and cancer treatment are common incidences of radiation exposure. The good news is there is hope for recovery if you know the right herbs and techniques.

Let's look at dietary methods first. Miso is something I generally recommend first and foremost. After the doctors in Nagasaki, who had been treating folks during the 1945 atomic bomb aftermath, did not show signs of radiation sickness a component in miso called zybicolin was identified. Zybicolin attracts, absorbs and discharges such radioactive elements as strontium from the body. Increasing raw fruit and vegetable intake is important. Be aware that cooking kills the enzymes in the foods that act as system cleansers, so raw is best in this case. Chlorophyll has been shown to neutralize poisons or toxic substances in the body and aid in elimination. Wheatgrass, spirulina and green leafy veggies are plants that are high in chlorophyll, but you can buy tinctured preparations like ChlorOxygen® as well. Increasing vitamins and minerals can be highly protective, namely Vitamin C, E, beta-carotene and selenium because of their work to protect against free radicals. Calcium, magnesium and manganese may help protect us from absorption of plutonium, tritium, strontium 90, iodine 131 and cesium 137. In fact, one of the first treatments often done for initial radiation exposure is a high dose of iodine. Iodine 131 is among the first isotopes involved in exposure and has a short half-life. By filling up the body's receptors of iodine in the thyroid, the idea is that iodine 131 has nowhere to bond and flushes through the body. Iodine is found in seaweeds and kelp as well as sodium alginate that binds with heavy metal particles and aids in elimination. For this reason, sea vegetables are often recommended in cases of radiation exposure. Note that when you increase your calcium intake, magnesium needs to increase as well to effectively protect against the absorption of strontium 90 and radioactive iodine. Dolomite, comfrey, cayenne, sesame seeds and molasses are examples of foods that contain this important balance of calcium and magnesium. The pectin found in apples, aronia berries (*Aronia melanocarpa*) and sunflower seeds, is especially effective against strontium 90. Small doses of clay, mud, charcoal and sand can be effective for short-term use to absorb and remove

radioactive substances from the body. Yogurt and other fermented milk products are also recommended as they neutralize strontium 90 in the intestines.

Externally, exposure to radiation can involve burns on the skin. Vegetable oils (olive, cold-pressed safflower and peanut) are effective internally for radiation sickness and externally for burns. St. John's wort oil shines when used for these burns as well. I have made a body cream for our farm store for years that includes coconut oil infused with comfrey and calendula. Not long after I started making it, I met a woman at the farmers market who had bad burns on her neck as a result of radiation treatments for throat cancer. She was very self-conscious about her skin being seen as it was so damaged, and she covered it up in a scarf and hat. I sent her home with a jar of my cream and asked her to try it. A week later she came bursting out of the crowd near my booth with a strappy tank top and a bright smile. The oil and herb combination had been so successful for her that she was out celebrating. This healing remains one of my favorite moments since I started my career, and it is why I continue to make the cream today even when I feel like moving on to different products.

Finally, there are a number of homeopathic remedies that can be employed to help with any overdose of radiation. A common one is yarrow flower essence, but of course the herb or tincture are helpful as well. Sea salt and baking soda baths in many forms can lower contamination levels as measured by radiation-detection devices. These baths can vary from hand and foot washes to full baths, and for heavy exposure sea salt and baking soda can be taken internally and externally at the same time.

Alternatives for internal application: nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Alternatives for external application: aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*)

Toxins/Detox

- Ginger
- Parsley

Our culture has become a bit consumed with the idea of detoxing. We are taught that we need to detox every once in a while after we have built up a load of toxicity. This is a gut-wrenching experience, literally, that is done

with fasting and pills or gritty drinks and results in extended periods of time in the bathroom purging your insides. This model of detox is inappropriate at any time.

If we only focus on the continual need to remove toxicity, we will be caught in a self-perpetuating cycle. Our current supplement market is flooded with products for purging all the chemical buildup out of our bodies. Detox is a buzzword. The underlying message here is, “Continue to immerse your body in chemical body care solutions, eat all the processed foods you want, we’ve got this. Just follow our simple three-step system once a month and we’ll force your body to purge so you can start again.” This logic is so pervasive because we have accepted the notions that our food has to be toxic and that our Western lifestyle is predetermined.

This notion of detox is founded in some of the same logic upon which we’ve based the battlefield style medicine of the Western paradigm. We strip out the bad so we can put the body back out into an unacceptable situation and allow it to run for another 100,000 miles. If we truly believe that we have toxicity in our cells, why aren’t we removing the problem while also changing the lifestyle that got us there? It is the definition of insanity to live the same lifestyle and eat the same foods that cause the effects we feel we need to remove.

We need to look at detoxification with different eyes. In a very real sense we are what we eat. When we eat damaged foods our body actually uses their components to make our cells. This means that we are incorporating genetically modified organisms, damaged proteins, improper fat structures and much more into our body’s structure. Our food is not just fuel — it is literally the building material that our body uses to keep our house standing.

On some level we seem to grasp that we need to purge the cells that are holding toxins, dyes, harmful fats and more. The focus, sadly, is on tearing out or tearing down. We need to look at detoxification for what it truly is: an opportunity to rebuild. It is very literally a transformation. We should detoxify by balancing and tonifying the digestive system. This can be done with food! In fact, parsley, is very adept at helping the body to release toxicity from its cells and flushing it away, literally. Parsley is a diuretic that can help move all but the really nasty stuff out of our cells. If there is a

particular heavy metal load in the body, foods like cilantro and chlorella can be used instead.

Switching to a diet of whole foods that are traditionally prepared is detoxifying. Repopulating our gut with the proper bacteria is also part of detoxification. If we create an environment in which intestinal flora can flourish, we have detoxified. The catch is that this type of work is ongoing, every day. It is slow, and often triggers a healing crisis that will walk us back through all the dysfunction we have encountered in our body as our toxin-holding cells are replaced with healthy ones. It is important to be prepared for the headaches, rashes, breakouts and even emotional upheaval that may occur during a healing crisis. These are storms before the calm, the death throes of imbalance and sickness just before they pass out of the body altogether through organs such as the liver, skin, kidneys or uterus. When you are working to change your diet or move toxicity out of your body, it can be helpful to take long baths with magnesium flakes and ginger. As your cells discard crud, you want to help escort it out of the body in any way you can. The salts help to pull toxins out while feeding the body with important minerals. Ginger will help to facilitate this exchange through its ability to encourage sweating. This bath should be at least 40 minutes long, and you will want to treat yourself once a day. You might also try dry brushing of the skin, massage or acupuncture. Always drink plenty of water while working stuck toxins out of the body.

Many do not see the worsening of their symptoms as an encouraging sign because they do not understand what is happening. Very often this is where someone decides that the so-called healthy changes are making them sick — and they stop what they are doing. You have to push through a healing crisis if you hope to achieve lasting balance and wellness. That said, detoxification should be slow and gentle. An intense healing crisis is inappropriate as it often signals that we are making too many changes too quickly. This is especially true if you are releasing heavy metal toxins, or working with a very young, aged and/or infirm individual. Small amounts of release over a long period of time are a better idea. Appropriate detoxification is simply the daily work of our multiple body systems to build this house we live in. It does not need to be a cathartic, harsh experience.

Alternatives for internal application: dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), dark green leafy vegetables, green tea, milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), triphala

Worms

- Garlic
- Sage

There is such a stigma attached to the notion that you would have to worry about worms in yourself or a family member. The truth is that we live among, and are a community for, a variety of other organisms. In addition to the good bacteria I've already discussed, parasites are part of this community. We can easily pick up these hitchhikers by eating contaminated meat, forgetting to wash our hands or eating unwashed produce.

There are a few common worms found in the human intestinal tract. They are pinworm, tapeworm, hookworm and roundworm. Changes in bowel movements and appetite are often the first signs of an infestation. It's also possible to experience pain in the abdomen. Very rarely there may be signs of worms in a bowel movement, however, this is typically only seen when the infestation is long-standing and rather advanced. Generally, these parasites are diagnosed with a fecal sample under a microscope.

Garlic, ginger and sage can all be used to repel or kill worms, though I like garlic the best. Any seed from a squash plant is also wonderful, so snack away on pumpkin seeds as often you would like while treating or preventing worms. If you are using garlic in your food on a routine basis, you are generally keeping parasites under control. If you suspect that you have a problem, it is time to use garlic in dose quantity. Two cloves of raw garlic (pressed or smashed) daily is the maximum dose needed for an average adult. It is important to scale this down for a child (one half to one clove) or anyone who is elderly or infirm. Most recommendations suggest a total of ten days treatment. This will vary if you happen to know which parasite you are working with. The idea would be to treat long enough to catch their adult stage and any eggs that may become fertile. For specific times of treatment, look into the lifecycle of the parasite you are treating.

If you have a small child or resistant adult in the house, garlic can be encapsulated or taken as an oil. Creativity may be the key in ingesting a therapeutic dose of garlic: think salad and garlic bread, garlic butter over vegetables and more! That's a lot of garlic, and you may be stinky, but it beats the alternative antiparasitic drugs that will kill more in your digestive system than the unwanted visitors.

While you are treating for worms your diet should focus on steamed vegetables, plenty of fiber, whole fruit and nuts. It is important to drink plenty of non-sugary, non-caffeinated liquid — so no juice. It is also imperative that your digestion is moving and eliminating appropriately. Natural remedies work mainly by making the environment inhospitable to your visitors and encouraging them to leave. Depending on the herb you use and the worm you have, natural remedies may also be able to kill the worm and/or its eggs. If there is no exit plan, you can get very ill or simply not achieve your goals. If you are chronically constipated you will want to add something to your diet from the constipation section of this book.

While you are treating for worms, it is not the time for dairy, sugar or processed foods as those choices will feed and strengthen the parasites. One of the best things you can do with your diet is to increase your consumption of probiotic foods. Drinking kombucha or kefir and eating lacto-fermented veggies and fruits at every meal and during snack time will go a long way to building the strength of your digestive system and outcompeting troublesome parasites with colonies of beneficial bacteria.

Prevention of worms includes eating a proper diet and supporting the immune system. Conventional wisdom would have you wear a bubble when you go outside or work in the dirt. There are simply too many benefits to being exposed to our environment for that to make good sense. Our immune system is designed to repel invasion by these worms when it is working correctly.

Alternatives for internal application: cucumber, pomegranate, pumpkin seeds, wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

As we age, our circulation tends to retreat further into the interior of our body, cutting off blood supply to the peripheral capillaries that support a supple, healthy skin. Our lifestyle of sitting and holding on to strong emotions further creates restrictions in blood flow, and we eat and drink things that increase inflammation and restrict the flow of blood from within. We tend to pollute our blood supply through improper habits and then expect overstressed kidneys, livers and skin to filter out the waste. Inevitably these systems fail to a certain extent and leave us with “dirty” blood. This situation contributes to much of our circulatory dysfunction.

My three suggestions for the circulatory system are:

1. Exercise regularly
2. Eat a proper diet that avoids inflammatory foods
3. Regularly brush the skin and take saunas

Arthritis

- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Parsley
- Sage
- Yarrow

Arthritis seems to set in as we age. It is far and away the single most asked about condition on our website or in our farmers market booths. Diet is a big factor. The everyday run-of-the-mill variety of arthritis is a result of an overly acidic body pH causing high inflammation.

My father suffers with arthritis in his neck. He has given me hands-on experience dealing with this issue. We have a couple of family favorites for topical relief. The first one requires us to grow a large amount of cayenne peppers each year. These peppers are the main ingredients in a salve that

makes use of the constituent within them called capsaicin. Capsaicin concentrates in the nerve endings and interrupts something called substance P that transmits pain sensation across the nerve endings. Using a product containing capsaicin will bring relief if you use it daily for at least one to two weeks. My second favorite topical application is applying comfrey in a warm poultice over stiff and sore joints.

In the case of rheumatoid arthritis, ginger has traditionally been used externally as a rubefacient. It acts by increasing blood flow to affected areas and thinning the blood, carrying away accumulated toxins in the joints while inhibiting the immune system's production of inflammatory leukotrienes. Garlic shares some of these same abilities. You will often see diuretics suggested in a natural protocol to support those with arthritis. This is because arthritis is a condition in which the blood becomes polluted with crystals and inflammatory proteins. Parsley, sage, yarrow and chickweed are all indicated to assist in cleaning the blood through the kidneys and liver and can be very helpful to add to your food, tea or tincture regimen.

There are many foods that can cause the high inflammation that results in arthritis: those foods are high fructose corn syrup, pasteurized dairy, plants in the *Solanaceae* family, conventionally raised meats, refined sugar, refined flour and unsoaked whole grains, to name a few. It is appropriate to reduce or eliminate intake of foods that provoke inflammation while you work to add foods that will help the body rebalance. My dad isn't into journaling, but simply by staying aware of flare-ups that coincide with what he ate, he quickly found that peanut butter is one of his worst triggers. The following are some common foods that are alkaline in nature and can help in an arthritic flare-up to calm things down in a hurry: lemons, limes, steamed dark green leafy vegetables, asparagus, dandelion greens, goat milk yogurt, cherries, papayas, seaweed, parsley and coconut. Spirulina is another good addition to the diet. Because of its high concentration of gamma linolenic acid (GLA) it helps to prevent osteoporosis and arthritis. You can use it in either tablets or powder (two tablespoons of powder or six tablets daily).

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), celery seed (*Apium graveolens*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), pine (*Pinus* spp.), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), white poplar (*Populus tremuloides*), wild lettuce

(*Lactuca virosa*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*), wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

Blood Issues — Clotting, Thinning

- Garlic
- Ginger
- Sage
- Yarrow

My father has always tended to have trouble with his back. This means that occasionally he is forced to rest for a few days until the muscles unclench and he can get mobile again. Unfortunately, a few years back, that time off gave his circulatory system a chance to develop a blood clot in his leg. Long periods of inactivity can offer opportunities for blood to clot. There are also many medications that can make the risk of their development even greater. Time at desks in the office, long car rides and trips in an airplane are often situations where you are warned to keep your body moving for good reason.

My father was lucky. He developed a red, sore place on the back of his leg that was bothering him so he went to have his doctor look at it. Before he could blink he was being admitted to the hospital. This is a very serious condition, and not one that you would want to handle all on your own. If a blood clot like this were to break loose and roam throughout your body, the risk of it getting to a vital organ and preventing oxygen and blood from their correct movement could be deadly. My dad is a great example of where I get my attitude about taking care of things at home. He didn't want to stay in the hospital any longer than he had to. They were forced to release him when my mother was willing to give him the shots he needed to maintain treatment.

I have since spoken to many people who have the tendency to develop blood clots. These folks aren't under an immediate threat but must take medication to thin the blood in an ongoing fashion for prevention. There are two great herbs to include in a daily program for clot prevention. Ginger is a natural blood thinner, and it also contains compounds that prevent platelets from sticking together to create clots. It can be eaten daily without

fear of overdose or negative side effect (unless you are pregnant). For those who don't like ginger, you can tincture it. However, do follow a chronic dosage and don't overdo it if you need to use ginger in this way. Garlic, yarrow and cayenne are natural blood thinners and will help to prevent blood clotting. For the cardiovascular benefit of garlic, you will want to eat it raw.

Sage is another wonderful herb for those who have a clot that is being monitored and would like to dissolve it. Sage is very helpful as a tea or in food to remove clots and coagulation safely.

Blood thinning alternatives for internal application: red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

Alternative agents to dissolve blood clots, for internal application: nettle (*Urtica dioica*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Gout

- Elder (berry)
- Parsley
- Yarrow

Gout is a specific type of joint problem that occurs when uric acid builds up in the body causing painful inflammations. In natural therapy, the body needs help in the act of elimination and this means supportive therapy for the kidneys. Do you know someone who is phlegmatic or who tends to be overly volatile? They often have a weakness in their kidneys. This temperament, coincidentally, also tends to overindulge in rich, sweet and fatty foods. All of this can lead to gout.

To support your kidneys we turn to the herbs that are classified as diuretics. Herbs such as parsley, elder berries or yarrow act just as allopathic diuretics do, by helping the kidneys flush toxins out of the body. Gout tends to be related to another issue regarding impurities trapped in the joints: arthritis. In both cases you may improve the condition of the blood, but you still need to deal with the symptoms. It is important here again to have a pain tincture and a formulation involving anti-inflammatories ready in the cabinet.

Lastly, and probably most importantly, diet must be addressed. Rich, fatty and sugary foods are to be avoided. Also on the avoidance list is coffee, caffeinated tea and alcohol. A pleasant treatment for gout is to eat red cherries. Red cherries contain compounds that help lower the uric acid concentration in the blood. A not-so-pleasant treatment that another herbalist I know used was urtification with nettles. In other words, beating your foot with freshly harvested stinging nettles to bring down the inflammation. Ouch — but effective!

Alternatives for internal application: burdock root (*Arctium lappa*), celery seed (*Apium graveolens*), crampbark (*Viburnum trilobum*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Alternatives for external application: cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Heart Issues — Arrhythmia, Chest Pain, Rapid Heartbeat

- Calendula
- Cayenne
- Lemon Balm

Irregularities in heartbeat can happen for a variety of reasons. If it is happening frequently or is accompanied by pain, nausea or sweating, get it checked out.

If you are not in an emergency situation, there are a number of things that you can try to deal with an occasional heart palpitation or irregular rhythm. From a dietary standpoint, you can experience a fast or skipping heartbeat if you are not eating enough high quality protein. I had palpitations as my body was adjusting after childbirth. My blood volume was changing, and there had been a great physical demand on my body. I found that if I was feeling a fluttering and I ate a piece of cheese, I could easily solve the problem. The other really common cause of palpitations is a misalignment in the spine, called a subluxation. This can occur because of the way you sit or stand. The area in the middle of your back is a concentration of nerve endings that feed the electrical currents governing your heart. Spinal misalignment can be corrected by a chiropractor and supported by you changing your posture.

If you are still struggling with an erratic or fast beat, be sure to eliminate all stimulants from your diet and then add in some of the herbal options described below.

Cayenne has been used with great success for general toning of the circulatory system. It is as useful day-to-day as it is in an emergency to balance the pulse and clear congestion. It can be used as a tonic on its own. Cayenne can also be used homeopathically if you are sensitive to it in food.

Lemon balm may also be an option because of its action on the nervous system. At times, our heart can beat erratically due to stress, and it is important to include a nervine in any formulation for the heart. If lymphatic congestion is causing pressure you may try calendula in a tea or tincture.

Stay on top of your symptoms. If you don't get better within a week after removing stimulants from your diet and trying some of the other natural suggestions, it is time to head back to your primary care physician for help.

Alternatives for internal application: hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

High Blood Pressure

- Garlic
- Ginger
- Lemon Balm
- Wild Bergamot
- Yarrow

High blood pressure can manifest for many reasons. When there aren't other obvious diseases or physical ailments contributing to the problem, it is best to look to stress, lifestyle and diet as primary causes. Stress and anxiety contribute to a state of tension in the body that can cause the constriction, tightening and inflexibility that can lead to high blood pressure.

High blood pressure can either mean an increase of fluids (as in water retention) or a decrease in space for fluid to circulate as a result of deposits in the blood vessels. In very simple terms, the herbs that are helpful in this matter either help the kidneys reduce the volume of water being retained in

our body or help to reduce the stickiness factor of our platelets. There are also some herbs that help with the efficient pumping of the heart. Ginger is not typically thought of as a specific herb for the circulatory system, but it effectively reduces the stickiness factor of our platelets. Diuretic herbs are helpful in the case of water retention. Nervines such as lemon balm and wild bergamot are important to include merely because they help the body to calm down; this reduces tension and allows the blood to flow more slowly and freely. Finally, herbs that are traditionally associated with heart health and blood pressure are highly indicated such as yarrow and garlic.

It is important to note that some high blood pressure can be explained by an unidentified food allergy — often to pasteurized dairy or wheat gluten. Also important is a proper potassium level in the body. Be sure that you remove hydrogenated oils, refined sugars and flours while adding back proper amounts of good fats such as coconut oil, lard and butter.

Alternatives for internal application: blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), crampbark (*Viburnum trilobum*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), hawthorn berry (*Crataegus* spp.), linden (*Tilia* × *europaea*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

High Cholesterol and Arteriosclerosis

- Chickweed
- Garlic

Arteriosclerosis is the term for hardening and thickening of the arteries. This is usually accomplished first by calcium deposits and later by cholesterol buildup. In a worst case scenario, these blockages can take up residence in the brain, aorta and also the arteries of the heart. Hardened and thickened arteries are one of the leading causes of death in our society.

So what is behind all this trouble in our circulatory systems? For starters, we have misidentified cholesterol as the problem. So many studies, like the China Study,[7] are being used as a basis for fad diets that have been debunked over and over again. Excessive blood cholesterol is not a result of eating foods containing cholesterol, but rather are the result of eating foods that cause inflammation and damage in our veins. This in turn stimulates our liver to produce cholesterol to protect us.

Rather than becoming focused on our cholesterol number, I believe it is more important to focus on what is making it so high. High cholesterol numbers speak to an inflammation somewhere in the body that the liver is trying to heal. Cholesterol, after all, is intended to shore up damaged blood vessels and keep them from failing. This means something in the diet or prescription list is most likely causing damage in the first place. If you go after just the number, the inflammation remains in place — only now there may be no protection mechanism keeping the damaged blood vessel intact. I would argue that lowering blood cholesterol is just as dangerous as the buildup of cholesterol mounding over a damaged spot and leading to a clog.

Reducing stress, alcohol and tobacco as well as making dietary changes are our best way to balance cholesterol in the body. Eating raw garlic or taking a garlic supplement daily over a long period of time has the ability to reduce inflammation in the body and thereby reduce cholesterol numbers.

Chickweed has long been used as a diuretic, helping the kidneys to effectively clean the blood. It is helpful in reducing cholesterol numbers because it helps the body to process fats properly and allows the kidneys to filter out the cholesterol that is no longer needed. This cholesterol is otherwise still floating around in your blood once you've corrected the inflammation that caused it to be produced.

As with any other imbalance, it is always important to eliminate those things that are causing damage in the body. Contrary to popular wisdom, it is not saturated fat but rather trans fats, hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup and other unnatural food products that cause inflammation and damage to our blood vessels. Further, it is important in this particular issue that we are not supplementing with calcium without magnesium. When we don't have proper magnesium levels our body doesn't know what to do with the calcium it ingests. Without instruction, calcium doesn't go into our bones; it can often circulate in our bloodstream and wind up creating the very deposits that start arteriosclerosis.

Alternatives for internal application: hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), linden (blossom) (*Tilia* × *europaea*)

Varicose Veins

- Cayenne

- Ginger
- St. John’s Wort
- Yarrow

Varicose veins are prevalent in my family. I have seen them as an eventuality since I was very young. It wasn’t until I started to study herbalism that I found I could do something to prevent them. A varicose vein is very simply one that has lost its elasticity; in the wall of the vein itself, in the valve within the vein or in the muscle tissue that surrounds it. When this weakness occurs, it is difficult for blood to pump through cleanly. The vein bulges out into a little pouch. This pouch is then a place where blood pools, causing unsightly blue swellings and often resulting in pain and pressure.

Our legs recover slowly from any abuse they take because they are so far away from the heart and must work harder to pump blood back up to our torso against gravity. Varicosities can truthfully occur anywhere in the body, it’s just that the legs are where they tend to occur most. I managed to avoid varicose veins until I was pregnant. In my case, the added pressure of carrying a swelling body, along with the downward pressure that comes along with pregnancy, took its toll. I now have one bulging vein that still requires some attention.

Varicose Vein Liniment Recipe

one part yarrow
one part calendula
one part St. John’s wort
one quarter part cayenne (or ginger)

Cover the herbs with warmed witch hazel extract (find it at the drug store) and let the mixture sit for two to three weeks. Strain and rebottle. This mixture will last indefinitely and can also be used for muscle pains, strains and aches.

There are a number of ways to help prevent varicose veins — from support hose to simply putting up your feet as often as possible. I learned quite early not to cross my legs even though it was considered “unladylike.”

By crossing your legs, you encourage blood to bulge and pool in blood vessels there, creating a propensity towards spider and varicose veins. It's important to eliminate structural reasons for any pressure on your cardiovascular system. Start with a chiropractor to eliminate any misalignments. Seek out a licensed massage therapist (LMT) that practices some form of abdominal massage therapy to ensure proper blood flow and internal organ alignment. After that, herbs that are specific for the health of your heart and blood vessels may be good to add to your diet or supplement plans. Cayenne and ginger, when added to your food, will help greatly. Yarrow is important to help move out old blood. It can be used internally or in a bath or liniment.

Working on varicose veins externally is a must. A liniment is an excellent daily ritual, once in the morning or evening or both. Be sure that you are always massaging from the extremity in toward your heart to help those little valves tighten and tone properly. The astringency of the herbs you're using, along with the witch hazel itself, will help to tighten the veins and improve blood flow.

Alternatives for internal application: hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), linden (*Tilia* × *europaea*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES

There are those who stand firm in a belief that we must think of others and vaccinate for the greater good of all. At the same time, there are more and more parents choosing to decline vaccination for their children. Those who make this decision do so for varying reasons. Many strive to protect the individuals in their family by eschewing vaccinations and encouraging a strong immune system in their children. Regardless of our choices, it is important that all of us stop living as if we were in a bubble. Members of both sides of this debate must avoid the common tendency to deny the existence of disease.

Unfortunately, our culture has a false sense of security when it comes to these childhood diseases. We tend to think that, since we vaccinate for them, they don't exist anymore. This is certainly not the case. Even if everyone in the US were fully vaccinated we would still be vulnerable. Travel is easy, and humans move about the planet with much more frequency than ever before. Once we understand that, the myth of herd immunity in any given country is just that — a myth. In most cases, we no longer even know what the symptoms or course of these illnesses might look like. We are terrified, then, of the unknown.

Many who choose to remain unvaccinated eat a great diet and live a healthy lifestyle. They too tend to live with a myth. That myth is shattered when their child gets sick. Living a counterculture life that involves opting out of the food system does not guarantee you won't get sick from the viruses and bacteria that have lived alongside our population since time began. The choice to opt out of vaccines, then, must include an awareness that those children may very well contract one or more of the "dreaded" childhood illnesses.

It is a mistake to believe that humankind has triumphed over the natural world and found a way to prevent illness. In fact, these bacteria and viruses are very much living and continuing to develop along with, and in reaction to, us. Regardless of where you stand on vaccinations, it is difficult to deny that the vaccines themselves, and the way they are introduced in the sheer numbers that they are currently, can negatively impact the healthy operation

of a fully functional immune system. It is a gamble to vaccinate, and it is a gamble to remain unvaccinated. You must choose which way you roll the dice for yourself and your family.

In the hubris of our medicalized culture, we trivialize diseases by assuming we don't need to know them while creating a mythical fear of them based on this lack of information. It is easier to attach a stigma to the word "measles" if no one knows anymore that it is a simple illness entailing a rash and a fever. These diseases can and will be experienced by both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated in the future, and parents are left unprepared when they no longer know what to do on their own.

To that end, it may be wise to take precautions to secure the health of the immune system above all else. This means adopting a diet and lifestyle that maintains this health. Taking control of household health requires that we not stick our heads in the sand. Be sure you understand what each of the dreaded childhood diseases actually entails. Determine how you will treat someone in your family if they are affected so that there is an orderly plan in the rare chance of infection.

Chicken Pox

- Calendula
- Lemon Balm
- Licorice

Chicken pox is a virus in the herpes family that tends to primarily affect children. It is spread through the air with the help of the respiratory system. Once chicken pox is in the bloodstream it takes two weeks to spread throughout the body before the telltale spots begin to appear. The spots will itch and ooze for the next three weeks during which time the affected person is contagious.

Beyond making a child miserable, this illness is relatively simple. The main focus is to manage the itching and to prevent scarring. Lemon balm and calendula are particularly helpful as an oil or salve for the lesions. Peppermint essential oil can be added to soothe the itch.

You may also wish to have your child drink a nervine tea such as lemon balm to help keep them calm and reduce the irritation from itching.

Once someone has had chicken pox, they have lifetime immunity. That doesn't mean that you should necessarily just let it run its course. The virus can settle into the central nervous system and bide its time if it is not handled correctly in childhood. It won't reappear as chicken pox, but will instead show up at some moment of weakness in adulthood as shingles. It is best to use the antiviral licorice as a tea, tincture or pill three times a day over the course of the illness.

Alternatives for internal application: astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*), woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Colic

- Ginger
- Hops
- Licorice
- Parsley
- Plantain

Colic by definition actually applies to a number of our body systems. Here in the childhood ailments section, I am only dealing with the common term "colic" as it applies to an infant up to four months of age. There is no true consensus on what causes colic, and very few cases are found to be related to an actual structural issue such as constipation, reflux or other obvious cause. The suggestion that in this case a baby cries to manipulate is not worthy of consideration in this author's opinion.

Regardless of what the medical community believes is the cause, the result is a baby that cries for more than three hours a day on an ongoing basis and must be soothed continually. There are no long-term complications, and this isn't really a disease, but it is something that you may want to address for your child's comfort and your sanity. If there are secondary symptoms like fever, excessive spitting up or blood in the stool, it is time to see your doctor.

There are many reasonable reasons suggested for colic, most notably a sensitivity to either something in the food that they are fed directly or something that is passing through mother's milk. It can be valuable for mom to keep a food diary and note when her baby is having the most

difficulty to see if she can link it to something in her diet and potentially remove it.

Herbal nervines such as hops can help to soothe and relieve pain. Herbs that are healing and soothing to the digestive lining, such as plantain and licorice (in tea form only), are also important. Finally, aromatic herbs that are high in volatile oils are often used to soothe the baby's tummy and dispel gas. This list might include ginger and parsley. All of these herbs are used to best effect if they are eaten or drunk as a tea by mom and then nursed through to baby. If you are bottle-feeding, a small amount of tea may be given to the baby directly instead. You can find an age chart for direct dosage in my book, *Conceiving Healthy Babies*.[8]

Alternatives for internal application: angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), anise seed (*Pimpinella anisum*), blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*), blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), calamus (*Acorus calamus*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), crampbark (*Viburnum trilobum*), dill (*Apium graveolens*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), gentian (*Gentiana lutea*), horseradish, juniper (*Juniperus communis*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Diphtheria

- Echinacea
- St. John's Wort

Diphtheria is a severe sore throat associated with an upper respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Beyond the sore throat there is a low grade fever and a grey membrane tends to grow over the pharynx, tonsils and in the nasal passages. Complications can include difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, suffocation and death. Cases have been rare for some time in the US.

A diagnosis of diphtheria would require antibiotics and potentially may require an antitoxin. Currently the antitoxin is not approved by the US FDA, so it requires a bit of work to get your hands on it. It was typically only used in very serious cases where the bacteria had proliferated to such an extent that it was producing a toxin. At that point, merely killing the bacteria would not suffice. Unfortunately, the safety of the antitoxin was called into question when there were periodically a rash of deaths associated with its administration.[9]

If you wish to treat diphtheria at home, this is definitely one you will want to work with a doctor on. Managing symptoms is very important for comfort, and this sore throat is not run-of-the-mill. One of the best herbs for diphtheria is echinacea, and it is a specific. There is a very long history of this herb's use in North America, all the way back to the indigenous populations who lived here before the continent was colonized. Echinacea is typically taken in large doses very frequently. A dose of one teaspoon of tincture every half an hour taken by mouth and held there for thirty seconds is recommended by Stephen Buhner.[10]

Just as with any other upper respiratory tract issue, it is important to avoid foods that increase the production of mucus. These foods include dairy, sugary drinks and foods, acidic citrus and improperly prepared grains. It is important to manage symptoms as suggested in the Sore Throat and the Common Cold sections. Keep liquid intake increased as long as there are symptoms. St. John's wort would be important to give in a tea or use the pain tincture from your first aid cabinet.

Alternatives for internal application: bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Haemophilus influenzae

- Elder (berry)
- Ginger
- Licorice

Of the diseases that this bacterial strain can cause in children under five, pneumonia, meningitis, ear infection, lower respiratory infection, sinusitis,

conjunctivitis and chronic bronchitis are the most common. The bacterium is spread through the air.

Haemophilus is a type of bacteria that is pretty much with us all the time. It tends to only be a problem when someone has a weakened immune system. We only vaccinate for one of the strains, and the ones for which we don't vaccinate are becoming antibiotic resistant and less likely to affect only children.

Most of the infections that this bacterium causes will require an accurate diagnosis from a physician. Once you have a diagnosis, you have the option to either use a prescribed antibiotic or use the herbs above on their own or in combination. The herbs would be used as a tea, tincture, capsule and/or in food at least three times a day.

With any of these infections, if you choose to use an herbal treatment, it is a good idea to stay in contact with your doctor to ensure that appropriate progress against the bacterial infection is being made.

Alternatives for internal application: woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

- Ginger
- Lemon Balm
- Licorice

This disease is spread through the air or by touching something covered with an infected person's bodily fluid. It is on the rise, and I have heard from my students of just about as many cases in adults as in children. Someone who is changing the diaper of a child with this disease should do so with gloves for two to three weeks after the infection, as the virus will remain active in the feces that long.

Common symptoms are fever, headache, lack of energy, ear pain, sore throat, blisters on the hands, feet, inside the nose, on the buttocks or in the mouth, loss of appetite, vomiting or diarrhea.

There are some serious complications if this disease is not treated, including meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, coma or death. We don't have anything in modern medicine to treat it, and we don't vaccinate against it.

You should be in contact with your family physician while you are treating at home.

Both licorice and ginger are active against the virus and can be used in tea, tincture or pill form at least three times a day. Lemon balm is effective infused into an oil or salve for the relief of pain caused by blisters and can be applied as often as needed. The other symptoms of this disease can be managed by looking at their individual entries in the first aid section of this book. It is worth noting that there are more specific plants that have been tested against this virus than can be found in the apothecary for this book. Stephen Buhner makes special mention that these plants are often considered invasives; so you are likely to find one wherever you live and you'll most likely be welcome to wildcraft as much as you'd like.[11]

Alternatives for internal application: Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*)

Hepatitis

- Calendula
- Elder
- Licorice
- Plantain

Hepatitis very literally means inflammation of the liver. There are six types of hepatitis. In the US, we generally vaccinate for two: Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. As a general part of an herbal formulation for any type of hepatitis, both plantain and calendula have been helpful as internal tonics. Plantain works to support the health of the liver and combat symptoms and side effects. Calendula works in the same way as plantain, but is antiviral in its action as well. Rest and plenty of fluids is the best course of action along with following a general whole foods diet with plenty of probiotic foods. It is especially important when the liver is affected in any ailment that a clean diet with a strict elimination of chemicals and contaminants be followed.

Hepatitis A is passed in human feces, hand to mouth. This happens mainly because of a lack of hygiene when people don't wash their hands; contact with contaminated water can also be infectious. This is a common problem at beaches. Many outbreaks center around daycare centers where

workers are changing diapers throughout the day and aren’t being careful with their hand washing. Most adults who contract hepatitis A never know it unless their flu-like symptoms include jaundice and cause them to seek a diagnosis. For children there usually aren’t any symptoms. The illness lasts a couple weeks. There is no medical treatment for hepatitis A, and it typically does not cause lasting damage unless you are someone with a preexisting liver condition. Licorice and elder have shown specific activity against hepatitis A. These would be used in tea or food form. Licorice should not be used for a long period of time as a tincture.

Hepatitis B is passed through unprotected sexual contact, contaminated or improperly sterilized needles or routine contact with the blood of someone who is infected. When contracted by a child, the illness can be non-symptomatic for years. In adults it typically involves jaundice, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fatigue. These symptoms typically pass without complication along with the illness. In children, hepatitis B can remain dormant and reemerge later in life presenting as liver failure or cancer. At the time someone is suspected of being infected there is an injection of antibodies available. Beyond management of symptoms, there really isn’t a treatment when the disease is active. Licorice has shown specific activity against hepatitis B. It should be used in tea, syrup or capsule form if not added to food. A tincture of this herb should not be used for a long period of time.

Hepatitis C is the other most commonly contracted type of hepatitis. It does not typically show any symptoms and is passed by infected needles or infected blood. Generally this virus lies dormant and presents a problem for a small percentage of those affected due to the potential for scarring of the liver. This scarring can eventually lead to cirrhosis, liver failure and cancer. This type of hepatitis is the most common reason for liver transplant. This is a serious illness that requires that you work with an experienced physician. Anyone suffering with this type of hepatitis is not without natural recourse. Licorice root and ginger are common herbs that can be added to food and teas to limit the spread and subsequent damage caused by this disease.

Alternatives for internal application: astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*), barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*), sweet Annie (*Artemisia annua*)

Measles

- Boneset
- Calendula
- Elder
- Licorice

The measles result from a virus that causes a fever, a characteristic red mottled rash, runny nose and a cough. This is not a very common illness. If you, or a family member, do contract the measles there is no current medical treatment. It is typically an illness that you allow to run its course within a week or so. Complications are rare, but possible — so it is important to keep in contact with your family physician and monitor progress appropriately.

At home, there are herbs that can be used to shorten the time of suffering and combat the virus. Both elder and licorice have shown significant activity against measles. Ginger has traditionally been used, but there is no evidence in a lab setting of its effectiveness. I would still say it's worth a shot! The management of symptoms would be your next focus, and for that boneset or elder would be highly recommended for fever. Calendula is a dual-purpose remedy, supporting the lymphatic channels in the body as they attempt to flush out the virus while also making a very useful topical agent. Calendula oil or salve may be used to soothe and heal the troublesome rash that comes along with the measles.

Alternatives for internal application: baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Meningitis

- Echinacea
- Licorice
- St. John's Wort

By definition meningitis is a serious inflammation of the protective covering over the brain and the spinal cord. It has a number of causes including viruses, bacteria, fungi or protozoa. Symptoms can vary, but

generally in adults it brings a very stiff neck, headache and fever. Other symptoms can be sensitivity to light and sound, vomiting and confusion. In children, there are often no symptoms at all other than possible irritability and abnormal fatigue. Many of the dreaded childhood diseases can lead to meningitis, so there are several immunizations that head off meningitis in a roundabout way. Only one immunization is available (at the time of this writing, it is only available for twelve-year-old children) for a specific type of meningitis and that covers the *Meningococcus* bacterium. The diagnosis for this disease is made with a spinal tap.

Bacterial meningitis is the most dangerous and tends to be addressed with broad spectrum antibiotics, close monitoring in the hospital and occasionally corticosteroids to manage inflammation. Supportive therapies to strengthen the immune and digestive systems can be employed at home in defense of contracting this type of meningitis. If you are diagnosed with or suspect bacterial meningitis, it is imperative that you seek professional care. Once you have been treated in a hospital you can safely return to home care and use the herbs above in a supportive fashion for the immune system along with close attention to a whole foods diet. St. John's wort would be especially applicable taken internally and applied externally for nerve damage, inflammation and pain if there has been a head injury prior to infection.

Viral meningitis is the most common and also the most benign form of the disease. It tends to run its course with symptom support, rest and fluids. Generally this type of meningitis can successfully be treated at home, and this is where the herbs can shine. Licorice, St. John's wort and echinacea can be added as tea, syrup or capsule or they can be included into a light, whole foods diet. These herbs have demonstrated activity against the virus.[12]

Alternatives for internal application (viral infection): baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Mumps

- Boneset
- Elder

- Ginger
- Sage

Mumps is a virus that causes the salivary glands to swell. Because it is a virus, it is not treated with antibiotics and tends to be addressed with bed rest and symptom management.

Like any other illness, the basics must be addressed. In the case of mumps there is often a high fever, headache and sore throat. The illness will pass with relatively little intervention, but it is important to monitor a person's intake of water and ensure that the fever is manageable.

As mentioned in the Fever section, I always let a fever run its course unless it is too high or too prolonged. I keep a tincture of boneset and or elder around to treat a fever that is out of control. Keep your general practitioner advised of how your household is progressing and advise of any problematic fevers.

For a sore throat, my favorite remedy is a lukewarm sage tea with a spoon full of honey. Add a bit of ginger for anti-inflammatory and pain relief, and you've got yourself a delicious sipping tea that will keep your loved one hydrated and comfortable.

There are a number of antiviral herbs and foods that can be used to shorten the period of the illness and curtail the spread of the virus. Adding mushrooms to your morning eggs or evening stir-fry can be an easy and delicious way to get these powerful antiviral and immune stimulants into the system. I particularly like shiitake, but you can also use maitake, hen of the woods or any number of other local delicacies.

All parts of the elder plant contain compounds that are specific against paramyxoviruses, a group which includes the mumps virus. The elder berry is the most studied and best known in medicinal preparations, but it is actually the bark which was traditionally used to most effect against the mumps. If you would like to use the bark, it is best to start with a dried preparation as it is less likely to cause stomach upset in most people.

Alternatives for internal application: woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Polio

- Elder

- Ginger
- Licorice

In unvaccinated populations, polio is a virus that tends to infect most everyone it comes into contact with. Sounds scary, right? The upshot is that in about 90 percent of these people there is absolutely no sign of infection. In about two percent there is a flu-like reaction that comes and goes as any flu will. Polio is only a problem in about one percent of any given population where there is infection. In that population, the result is quite serious because these people are prone to the virus taking over the nervous system and causing disfigurement and loss of the use of limbs due to paralysis.[13] In the worst cases it results in the inability to breathe on one's own — thus the frightening image of life in an iron lung.

This disease so captured the public's imagination in the 20th century that it fueled the rush to create vaccines. Very simply, polio is an inflammatory disease centered in the spinal cord. If someone in your family is one of the rare people who experiences paralysis, the only treatment is to provide help with breathing machines in the hospital until the systemic paralysis wears off (one to two weeks). After that time, treatment consists of physical therapy, antibiotics and pain medication. Many who experience dangerous paralysis can regain movement in their affected limbs but may forever struggle with inherent muscle weakness.

For everyone else who contracts polio, the infection can be very minor. The herbs that have been found to be effective against the polio virus are elder, ginger and licorice.[14] Elder and ginger can be given at home in tea or tincture form. Licorice would be best in tea form.

Alternatives for internal application: baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*)

Rotavirus

- Licorice

Rotavirus tends to attach itself to foods such as vegetables at a salad bar or poorly grown and processed spinach or sprouts. It's generally called

stomach flu and can cause nausea and diarrhea that may lead to abdominal pain, dehydration, fever, headache, lethargy and muscle aches.

Rotavirus is a relatively simple virus in itself. It will run its course and leave no lasting effects. It is, however, one of the major causes of death among children around the world. In a healthy child, it is unlikely to be that serious. In a compromised child it is more concerning.

If you suspect rotavirus, first ensure that the affected child is kept properly hydrated. A tea of licorice may be washed down with a small amount of cranberry juice three times a day. Manage any other symptom as recommended in the first aid section. As always, if the child becomes listless, dehydrated or develops a fever that is excessively high, it is time to seek the help of a physician.

Alternatives for internal application: stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*); unripe, cooked, green bananas

Scarlet Fever

- Boneset
- Echinacea
- Elder (berry)
- Ginger
- Licorice

Most of the symptoms of scarlet fever are the result of a toxin that is shed by the *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacteria. This infectious disease starts with a sore throat, fever and characteristic rash that looks similar to a sunburn with bumps. Often the cheeks are red, but there is a white clearing around the mouth and raised red bumps on the tongue. A child may or may not also have swollen glands. Each person may have a unique configuration of these symptoms, having only one or perhaps all at once. It is easiest to diagnose if they have all of them, or if you just have a culture analyzed by a doctor’s office.

There is no vaccine. Scarlet fever is treated allopathically with antibiotics. By ten years of age generally a child has acquired a resistance to scarlet fever. There are a whole host of complications that can stem from this disease. Our history and literature is littered with stories about people,

such as Helen Keller, who contracted scarlet fever and through complications had lifelong impacts. In the case of Helen Keller, of course, it is believed that this was the cause of her deafness and blindness. People routinely died from this illness before there were antibiotics. This is logical as, if left untreated, the levels of *S. pyogenes* would continue to rise in the body and the resulting toxins would cause potential sepsis, meningitis, pneumonia, heart damage and much more.

It is advisable that you work closely with your family physician in treating scarlet fever. You may choose to use prescribed antibiotics and add more probiotic foods to the diet to support the body. You may also use any of the above herbs internally at least four times per day as a tea or tincture. If you do, it is important to make a plan with your physician for a return visit for blood or throat cultures to monitor the levels of *S. pyogenes* and their toxins. If you see evidence that the levels are lower and you see that the child is improving, you may feel better about moving forward with treatment at home. If the rash is uncomfortable or itchy you may want to use a calendula oil or cream to keep the skin hydrated and healing.

Alternatives for internal application: baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), honey, woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Strep Throat

- Echinacea
- Ginger
- Hops
- Licorice

Strep throat is caused by the *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacteria. As a child, I remember what seems like an endless number of trips to the doctor for a throat culture. I was forever getting strep throat. This meant constant dosage with various antibiotics. Had my mother known what I know now, it might have been a much simpler and less traumatic recovery.

This bacterium makes for a very sore throat. What differentiates it from any other sore throat is the presence of white patches that can be seen by shining a flashlight into the back of the throat.

All of the above herbs can be used in combination or singly to soothe and treat strep throat. My favorite treatment is an echinacea and honey spritzer. Spray six-eight spritzes into the mouth and allow it to slowly slide down and coat the throat. This should be repeated every hour. In between these spritzes, a warm ginger tea can be soothing and can further fight the bacterium that causes this illness. If you do not see any improvement in three days of this treatment it is time to seek the advice of a physician.

Alternatives for internal application: baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), honey, woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

Tonsillitis

- Echinacea
- Garlic
- Plantain
- Sage

The tonsils for many years were treated as non-essential organs. It is becoming less common to remove them out of hand, but we still seem to take their function for granted. These glands are part of the lymphatic system and are therefore a part of the body's defense against infection. The inflammation of these glands, called tonsillitis, is a demonstration of how well they are working rather than a syndrome that we must correct by cutting them out. Rather than blaming the messenger we should be looking for the source of the infection somewhere else in the body. Plantain, echinacea and garlic are all appropriate herbs to use to support the body in its lymphatic work. In the form of a tea, tincture or pill these herbs can be taken at least four times a day during the acute stages of tonsillitis to get past any infection. A gargle with lukewarm sage tea might also be helpful to alleviate the pain in the throat where the tonsils are located. This might also be a good time to use an echinacea throat spray to numb the throat and reduce infection.

Ironically, whenever I heard about kids getting their tonsils out as a kid I always heard that they were allowed to eat lots of ice cream afterwards. That is just about the worst thing that can be eaten when the throat is inflamed. Avoid milk products, sugar, refined flour and anything else that

tends to encourage mucus production and inflammation while healing from tonsillitis.

Alternatives for internal application: cleavers (*Galium aparine*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), pokeroot (*Phytolacca americana*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*)

Whooping Cough

- Garlic
- Hops
- Lobelia
- Mullein
- St. John's Wort

Whooping cough is a fairly common illness that is caused by a bacterium called *Bordetella pertussis.* Anyone who has ever had a vaccination but hasn't continued a regular vaccination schedule past childhood, as well as anyone who hasn't been vaccinated, is at risk.

For most, this sickness will pass without symptoms. For those who show symptoms they typically look like the common cold. As the cold develops, the telltale whooping cough begins. Coughing can last anywhere from 30 seconds to 2 minutes, and there is very little, if any, chance to breathe during a fit. When the person gasps for air between coughing fits they tend to make a "whoop" sound through their inflamed airways. Whooping cough is most dangerous for infants under the age of six months. In that population there is a small chance of brain damage (due to lack of oxygen while coughing) and death.

It seems that outbreaks of whooping cough come in waves, peaking every five years or so. We just had a peak here in my area of the US over the past year. People who are infected often don't know they are, and therefore they tend to spread the illness innocently. Of the dreaded childhood diseases, this is one that you are pretty likely to have to deal with.

Once whooping cough has been contracted, the common treatment plan is to let it run its course. This can take up to three months. You, of course,

as a home health care practitioner do not need to let your loved one suffer. There are things that you can do to shorten the illness, make the symptoms less severe and ultimately less dangerous.

Garlic can be used as a natural antibiotic. Lobelia (in small doses), hops and mullein can help to soothe the mucus membranes while assisting the body to push out congestion. St. John's wort can be used both internally as a tea and externally as a liniment to ease the pain of repeated coughing.

When coughing is bad enough to threaten the ability to breathe you can use steams for adults and older children. For a very young child a steam can be done in a small bathroom. Choose one that does not have any openings to the outside and that can be shut tight. Place a few drops of essential oil (eucalyptus would be a nice choice) in a diffuser in the bathroom. Start up the shower and allow it to run at the hottest temperature to fill the room with steam. I once did this with a three-month-old. They don't have the greatest attention span. You can carry them into the bathroom with a blanket and stuffed animal to snuggle and sleep, or you can bring in a toy for them to sit with.

Once your body recovers from whooping cough there are no further complications, and you are generally immune for life.

Alternatives for internal application: baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), ephedra (*Ephedra sinica*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*), pansy (*Viola tricolor*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), wild cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

SKIN

The skin is our largest organ and our first defense against infection and disease, yet so many of us take its contributions completely for granted. It is home to both good and bad microorganisms that live in balance on a healthy body. When we become imbalanced internally, the skin often shows the first signs of an issue. Also, when we are working through a healing of a deep imbalance within, it is often the skin where toxicity makes its last stand resulting in unsightly and painful rashes.

When the skin is irritated, it is important to look to larger issues. Usually there are imbalances in the digestion, immunity, kidneys or the liver. If we treat just our exterior at these times, we will not have lasting results.

Treat your skin well. Wash it with gentle soap, nourish it with good nutrition and moisturizing oils and it will treat you well. Avoid antibacterial products that, as a rule, would contribute to an imbalanced state among your microorganism hitchhikers. While our skin can often act out what is going on internally, it is just as easy to suffer from imbalances that are truly only skin deep.

Boils

- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- Echinacea
- Garlic
- Plantain
- St. John’s Wort

This skin infection occurs at the site of a hair follicle when the body’s resistance is low and there is an opening for either *Staphylococcus aureus* (including MRSA) or *Streptococcus pyogenes* to get in and begin to reproduce. The skin tends to swell, turn red and become sore. Eventually it may open to release pus and dead skin matter.

Antibiotics are available; unfortunately many of the strains of *Staphylococcus* are resistant to antibiotics and it will most likely be just a short span of time before there are none available. In this case, home treatment is almost certainly safer than hospital treatment. While these bacteria can become resistant to the one-dimensional, isolated constituent antibiotics, they are not able to modify themselves to defend against those found within a plant used in its whole form. Discuss your plans with your family physician and keep them updated as to the progress of any infection. This is another infection in which it is best to draw a line around the initial redness. If redness spreads outside the circle, if there are any red lines radiating away from it, if a fever develops or the wound begins to fester, seek help.

For any skin infection with the potential for danger it is important to use herbs both internally as well as externally. A plantain, comfrey or cabbage poultice or compress should be applied and changed often to pull out pus and infection. If you wish, honey can also be applied directly to the infection with a light gauze covering. St. John's wort can be applied topically for pain and inflammation while it is used internally to boost the immune system, the digestion and provide pain relief. Garlic and echinacea are specific for supporting the immune system in a fight against the *Staphylococcus* bacteria. Echinacea in particular has been found to have direct activity against these strains.[15]

As the boil begins to heal and is no longer displaying signs of infection, chickweed and comfrey can be added to any oil or salve to heal the open skin.

At all points of treatment consider diet as well. *Staphylococcus* strains are on our skin and in our environment most of the time. They only become a problem when we are weakened and ripe for colonization. The diet needs to emphasize food-based probiotics. Living enzymes in properly fermented foods ensure that the gut is colonized by good guys and leave little room for bad guys. While building the gut flora you also build the immune system.

Alternatives for internal and external application: barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Eczema

- Calendula
- Cayenne
- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- Echinacea
- Ginger
- Licorice
- Parsley
- Plantain
- St. John’s Wort

Eczema is an intensely itchy, allergic disease. The skin in an outbreak is usually red, dry, thick and irritated but can also be weepy and crusty. The eczema rash is commonly on the face, wrists and the insides of the elbows and knees. Eczema was once considered to mostly affect children, but I suspect that is changing as our diet and cultural practices steer us further away from healthy digestion.

Eczema and allergies walk hand in hand. There is a well-established connection between food, airborne and contact allergies and outbreaks of this skin affliction.

There is evidence of an overgrowth of *Candida albicans* and *Staphylococcus aureus* in those with allergies and eczema. This can demonstrate that an individual’s gut flora did not develop properly to outcompete these problematic organisms. While there aren’t necessarily too many complications involved with eczema, in today’s world an increased incidence in staph infections, herpes simplex warts and *Molluscum contagiosum* is definitely a danger.

Once again, eczema is a skin issue that requires supportive therapies for the liver as well as the digestive and immune systems. It is common for those with eczema to have chronic low levels of stomach acid. This, of course, impedes the digestion and therefore assimilation of nutrition. Ginger and St. John’s wort are both capable, when eaten or taken in teas, of bringing stomach acids to an appropriate level. There is some evidence that eczema sufferers tend toward a deficiency of omega-3 fatty acids and zinc.

Add a cod liver oil supplement and bring in foods rich in zinc to shore up these nutritional deficiencies.

One of the biggest things that we can do for eczema is to monitor the diet for anything that triggers an outbreak. Food allergies are so often the cause of eczema that eliminating foods such as dairy and nuts can go a long way toward reducing symptoms.

Echinacea is specific for eliminating toxicities and allergens that can cause skin conditions. It should be used both internally and externally to prevent or address infection from *Staphylococcus aureus.* Licorice root can be used in a tea or pill to address the need for antihistamines during an outbreak of allergy symptoms.

Parsley, cayenne, chickweed, comfrey, plantain, echinacea and licorice root can all be used in topical applications to protect the skin and promote healing of irritated and itchy eczema skin. One of my favorite treatments is a comfrey and calendula soak. As some of the allergic response can come from allergen contact with exposed skins, be careful about your choices for detergents, soaps and body washes.

Alternatives for internal application: balm of gilead (*Populus balsamifera*), blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), burdock (*Arctium lappa*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), pansy (*Viola tricolor*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), sarsaparilla (*Smilax officinalis*), violet (*Viola odorata*), yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*)

Alternative for external application: chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)

Fungus

- Calendula
- Wild Bergamot

External fungal infections can be dealt with topically, though it is always a good idea to address the imbalance in your diet that may be causing the problem. Calendula and wild bergamot can be applied externally with a poultice, compress, liniment or powder.

Internally, it is important to avoid consuming refined sugars and flours. It can be helpful to follow the same suggestions for internal yeast infections while fighting an external fungal infection. At the end of the day, any time a

fungus is able to get a foothold in the body, it speaks to an imbalance of the internal flora. It is helpful to increase your intake of probiotic food and beverages.

Alternatives for internal and external application: black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*)

Hemorrhoids

- Chickweed
- Calendula
- Mullein
- Plantain
- St. John's Wort
- Yarrow

Hemorrhoids are essentially just varicose veins that are located inside or just outside the anus. There isn't one set reason for them to develop, though obesity, pregnancy and constipation are some common causes.

These bulging veins can be painful and sometimes they can bleed, but they are rarely serious. Herbs and natural therapies are some of the best options we have to bring tone and healing to occasional hemorrhoid problems.

Sitz baths are one of the best ways to reduce inflammation. You can do this with plain water or you can make it into a tea with calendula to heal any open wounds.

Topically, plantain or green clay can be made into a poultice to shrink swollen tissue. This is messy but worth it. Rinse off the poultice as soon as it has dried with cool water and replace until it has done its job.

St. John's wort or mullein are good both topically and internally for pain and inflammation. Yarrow is helpful externally in a liniment or cream to move inflammation out of the area. Finally, chickweed can be used as a tea, tincture or pill to relieve constipation.

From a dietary standpoint, increasing fiber and fluid intake is the most important factor.

Alternatives for internal application: nettle (*Urtica dioica*), triphala

Alternatives for external application: witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Herpes Simplex

- Elder (berry)
- Garlic
- Lemon Balm
- Sage
- St. John’s Wort
- Wild Bergamot

The herpes simplex virus comes in two varieties. Herpes simplex I is found around the mouth and is often called a canker sore or fever blister. Herpes simplex II is found on the genitals and is what we generally term herpes.

This virus tends to have an initial outbreak and then it often goes dormant within the nervous system waiting for stress to weaken the body enough for it to rise again. When the virus is active, it presents blisters that are painful and potentially contagious. You are never cured of herpes once the virus is in your body. A large percentage of the population is infected with Herpes simplex I, though many are asymptomatic.

First and foremost, the focus for the treatment of herpes simplex needs to be on supporting the nervous system and keeping it healthy. Sage, wild bergamot and lemon balm are some of the best herbs for this work. Lemon balm is a specific for healing in relation to viruses that sleep at the nerve endings. Sage supports the nervous system when it is under viral attack. Both are delicious in foods and easy to drink in teas. Elder berries have antiviral activity against the herpes simplex viruses so they may be used preventatively as well as, in the event of an outbreak, to shorten the duration of symptoms.

St. John’s wort is not a specific for the herpes virus, but it can be used both internally as well as topically for pain relief. Lemon balm has shown itself to be very effective as a topical oil or salve to heal the blisters of a herpes outbreak. Applications have shortened the duration of symptoms, prevented secondary infection and soothed pain and redness. There is some

evidence that the topical application of lemon balm also helps to prevent future outbreaks.[16]

From a dietary standpoint it appears that it can be helpful to increase the intake of zinc, vitamin C and L-lysine. Deb Soule recommends 1,000 mg of lysine two to three times a day for three months.[17] She also recommends pollen or spirulina, vitamin E and a good beta-carotene supplement to support the body and suppress the herpes virus. It is generally recommended that garlic can be eaten raw, as much as can be tolerated, for its antiviral properties.

Alternatives for internal application: astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*), baikal skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), sweet Annie (*Artemisia annua*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Lipoma

- Chickweed
- Sage

Lipomas are benign fatty tumors that typically occur just below the surface of the skin. They are generally left alone unless they are especially unsightly or in a painful spot. When they need to be removed, it's usually a relatively simple in-office procedure.

There are a few natural options that can help to avoid the need for the knife. Castor oil, heated and applied as a compress, will help to dissolve a fatty deposit when applied nightly over time. Sage and chickweed are also specific for lipoma. They can both be used internally to help move congestion out of the body's tissues. They are most helpful if they are also applied to the body either as a poultice, compress, oil or liniment.

Psoriasis

- Calendula
- Cayenne
- Chickweed
- Garlic

- Ginger
- Hops
- Licorice
- Parsley
- Plantain
- Yarrow

Psoriasis comes on as red, scaly patches of very dry skin usually on the scalp, lower back, elbows, knees and knuckles. These scaly patches are essentially the overstimulation of a mechanism involved in the routine replacement of skin cells. The body goes into overdrive, laying down thick layers of skin scales. In severe cases this condition can lead to psoriatic arthritis. There is no medical consensus as to the cause of psoriasis, nor is there any "cure." Traditional medical treatment involves the topical application of cortisone cream. This cream inhibits the immune system. Over time enough is absorbed that these creams have the same effect in the body as oral corticosteroids.

Ironically, psoriasis most likely originates as a deficiency of the immune system stemming from a dysfunction in the digestive tract. Further inhibiting the immune system does not, in the long run, help in any real way. Psoriasis is not hereditary, though it seems to run in the family. This is not too surprising to me as it is my theory that we do not pass along disease so much as nutritional deficiency and dietary habits. Studies have shown that in those affected with psoriasis there appears to be a tendency toward incomplete protein digestion, gut flora imbalances and a weak liver. Aspirin and stress may exacerbate symptoms.

In studies, patients who eliminated meat and gluten improved greatly. This is encouraging support for my theory that psoriasis is largely a failure in the digestive system. Removing things from the diet that are difficult to digest takes stress off the system as a whole. Sunlight is often suggested and has been shown to reduce or eliminate symptoms altogether. There is a digestive correlation here again, as the inability to digest difficult fats will lead to a deficiency of vitamin D. In one study it was found that both oral and topical vitamin D therapy greatly reduced the incidence of psoriasis and most sufferers tend to have a deficiency in this vitamin.[18]

From a dietary standpoint, psoriasis symptoms can be greatly resolved for most people by removing alcohol, sugar, gluten and improperly prepared grains. Many resources suggest moving to a vegetarian diet because meat encourages the inflammatory response. I would suggest instead that meat is simply difficult to digest. It does not need to be removed altogether; instead, the impaired digestive system needs to be reignited, repopulated and repaired. To do this, it might be wise to withhold those things that are difficult to digest for a short period, perhaps a week at a time. Eliminating dangerous fat sources such as margarine and other hydrogenated oils and eating small amounts of good fat paired with high quality protein is also a good suggestion. Herbs that promote a healthy digestive system such as garlic, ginger, hops, parsley and cayenne would then be a good addition to any plan to heal psoriasis. Yarrow is also a well-known digestive tonic that has been used in this condition, but be careful as it is a diaphoretic. Occasionally, diaphoretics can be irritating to psoriasis. If yarrow bothers you, pick another herb. Incorporating your own bitters formula before each meal or starting your day with fire cider will help to reignite your digestion and get it back up to speed. When this system is fully operational it is able to digest the large and difficult proteins in the foods that may initially cause problems. Adding whole food probiotics into every meal is a must.

Some of the other important dietary notes include a need for omega-3 fatty acid supplementation. This can be done with cod liver oil to also supply more vitamin A. Both vitamin A and zinc levels are often insufficient, so finding foods or whole food supplements that you like and incorporating them into your daily diet is sure to help.

Topical applications of capsaicin cream have shown favorable results.[19] Licorice root used topically as a liniment, oil or cream has been found to act similarly to hydrocortisone. The topical use of chickweed, calendula and plantain has also shown some benefit. It can be a good idea to spend some time in the sunlight. One hour a day if possible and, against popular advice, it is best to expose yourself during the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM for the appropriate UV exposure. Be smart and spend time in dappled shade, wear gauzy coverings or hats and minimize the intensity so as to not cause skin damage.

One final note: It has long been accepted that there is a psychological and emotional component to psoriasis. Many people who suffer with this problem can point to one traumatic point in their lives after which they began to see symptoms. Be sure to include nervines in your plan, such as hops, to alleviate stress on the nervous system. There is a connection between the digestion and the nervous system of which we must be mindful. For a complete health plan, take care of your emotional state while you build your digestive and immune systems.

Alternatives for internal application: balm of gilead (*Populus balsamifera*), blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), burdock (*Arctium lappa*), cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), sarsaparilla (*Smilax officinalis*), sassafrass (*Sassafrass albidum*), yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*)

Alternatives for external application: aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)

Shingles

- Hops
- Licorice
- Lemon Balm
- St. John's Wort

Shingles is the second strike of the *Varicella zoster* virus that causes childhood chicken pox. In adults, often when the immune system is depressed, this virus reappears as shingles. Unfortunately, this time the virus is much more problematic. It appears most often on the face as tiny blisters. There is excruciating pain and sometimes fever, swollen lymph nodes and digestive disruptions. While the blisters are active, the person is contagious.

My father-in-law developed shingles on the same day as my son was born. It kept both he and my mother-in-law away for the first few weeks of my son's life, which was difficult for everyone. Most unfortunately for my father-in-law, he developed one of the more common complications of shingles. He continues to this day to suffer with neuropathy in the skin near his eyes because of the damage the inflammation did to his nerve endings.

This isn’t necessarily something he’ll have to deal with forever, but it tends to take a long time to recover.

Medical treatment of shingles involves the use of antivirals, corticosteroids to fight the inflammation and pain medications. Herbs can be particularly helpful in the case of shingles. Both lemon balm and licorice are active against the *Varicella zoster* virus. They are able to support and tone the immune system, typically shortening the duration of an outbreak and preventing another one from occurring. St. John’s wort may be used internally for pain along with hops, or it may be used externally. St. John’s wort oil is one of the best treatments there is for a topical treatment of damaged nerve endings. It can greatly reduce the experience of burning, tingling and pain that can occur if someone experiences neuropathy as a result of this viral outbreak.

Alternatives for internal application: passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), skullcap (*Scutellara lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*)

URINARY TRACT

Our urinary tract is responsible for managing the body's water content. Our kidneys filter waste from the blood and contribute to an appropriate electrolyte balance. They also have a hand in our blood pressure, mood and pH levels. Dysfunction within this system can have quite a variety of symptoms. In addition to eating a healthy diet, you can support your urinary tract health by getting plenty of non-caffeinated, non-sugary liquid every day, avoid sitting for long periods of time and removing as much stress from your life as possible. I hear so much about the recommendation to drink cranberry juice for kidney health; this is actually true. Remember to drink unsweetened, real cranberry juice only. It will help the kidneys maintain the body's appropriate acid-alkaline balance.

Kidney Stones

- Chickweed
- Comfrey
- Garlic
- Hops
- Lobelia
- Parsley
- St. John's Wort

There are several different kinds of stones that can form in the kidneys. Stones can form as a result of inappropriate calcium supplementation with substances that the body cannot metabolize. I see this often as a result of using cheap calcium pills. They can form due to dehydration. When you don't drink enough liquid, urine becomes concentrated and thick. This situation allows the chemicals in your urine to cement together and form gravel or stones. Still other kidney stones are formed in people who are particularly sensitive to the oxalic acid content in food. Oxalic acid is found in leafy greens such as spinach and kale. When we eat these vegetables raw instead of cooked, their oxalic acid content is an irritant in the urinary tract.

Some are more sensitive than others and progress beyond mere irritation to a point that they develop kidney stones.

In those who are prone to them, many stones pass out of the body during urination without any symptoms. When they grow large enough to obstruct the flow of urine from the kidney to the bladder, they become problematic. Excruciating pain in the low back and radiating from the hip to the groin is the result. At that point, depending on the size of the stone as assessed by a doctor, you may be allowed to pass the stone on your own or you may be prescribed any of a number of medications to encourage the stone to move through the system. Pain management is essential. When the stone won't pass on its own, there are a number of non-surgical and surgical options available.

There are quite a few herbs that are grouped together as *anti-lithics.* This means that they are stone busters. Instead of forcing through the stone as is, these herbs can be used internally to help break up or dissolve the stone and make it easier to pass. Parsley and garlic are both in the anti-lithic class of herbs.

As the stone passes it can scrape the lining of the urethra causing bleeding and pain. Usually nausea, chills, sweating and shock can occur as well. Anyone passing a kidney stone should be working with their doctor as there is a potential for the urethra to become completely blocked, making the situation much more dangerous.

If you are attempting to pass a stone at home, anti-lithic herbs are just the beginning. To that tea you will want to add a urinary demulcent such as chickweed to soothe the sensitive lining of the urinary tract. Garlic can be added to a formula as a urinary antiseptic in order to prevent any infection.

To the internal treatment you may choose to add a topical. Start by creating an herbal bath with hops and comfrey. Have the affected person soak in this bath while you apply cold, wet washcloths to their forehead and the back of their neck. When the water cools down, take them out and dry them off. While keeping them warm, begin adding hot poultices of hops and lobelia to the skin over their kidneys. Alternate these herbs in hot and cold poultices in half an hour intervals. This is the time also to administer your pre-prepared pain tincture or simply add St. John's wort to the anti-lithic, demulcent tea your loved one has already been sipping.

When the crisis is over, it is time to plan ways to prevent kidney stones from happening again. Proper daily water intake is very important along with ensuring calcium and magnesium levels are where they need to be. It is very important that someone who is prone to kidney stones avoid synthetic supplements. Food only! Seaweed or blue-green algae is going to be the best way to get these nutrients. Avoid soft drinks, high fructose corn syrup and other refined sugars, caffeine and raw oxalate-rich vegetables. Above all, there is clearly a need to work to improve the overall health of the kidneys. Kidney stones are a cry for help that is hard to ignore and not worth repeating.

Alternatives for internal application: cornsilk (*Zea mays*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), gravelroot (*Eupatorium purpureum*), hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), uva ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), yarrow

Tinnitus/Hearing Loss

- Plantain
- St. John's Wort
- Wild Bergamot

Tinnitus is a nuisance problem that is not life threatening, but degrades the quality of life. It is a constant buzz, hum or roar that only you can hear.

There is no real consensus in the medical community as to what causes tinnitus, and there is no treatment other than coping techniques. Over the years various practitioners have noted the many things that seem to have triggered a patient's hearing trouble. Tinnitus can be brought on by ongoing usage of aspirin, steroids, antidepressants, aspartame, antianxiety medications, antihistamines, antibiotics and painkillers.[20] Ringing can occur as a result of low blood volume, as in anemia. High blood pressure, triglycerides or cholesterol can be the cause as can head injuries. Tinnitus is another disorder that can be brought on by food allergies. The inflammation that can occur as a result of an allergy can impact the ear canal, so keeping a food journal and eliminating problematic food can help treat your ringing ears. My dad's hearing damage is due to both loud music and the result of a

couple years working on the flight line. Barring any of these conditions, occasionally tinnitus can be the result of a virus.

Zinc supplementation has shown encouraging results, especially with age-related tinnitus. Throw a handful of pumpkin seeds into your trail mix every day to get this nutrient from your food. Vitamin B_{12} is also helpful and can be obtained from another favorite superfood, spirulina.

St. John's wort oil rubbed directly behind the ear can help to heal the nerve damage to ears that can often result in hearing impairment and ringing. In ayurveda, it is sesame oil that is most helpful both behind the ear and in the ear (a couple drops daily). You can also incorporate the internal use of wild bergamot and plantain to reduce inflammation in the ear canal and stop the ringing. Plantain should be used fresh: just two tablespoons juiced three times a day for six weeks.

You may already have wondered why an ear problem is here in the urinary tract health section of this book. The reason is that from a Traditional Chinese medicine point of view the kidneys and the ears are linked. I learned long ago that itchy ears can be a signal that the kidneys need some attention, so when my first client came to me with tinnitus that is where I instinctively looked. Tinnitus has no treatment in Western medicine, but in Traditional Chinese medicine it is wellknown and there is a good treatment plan. Ringing that sounds like a tiny insect and is accompanied by low back pain and frequent urination is often relieved by using a diuretic and kidney toning herbs. Interestingly enough, ringing that sounds more like a roar and is accompanied by bowel irregularity or digestive issues suggests a weakness in the liver and gall bladder. Both types of tinnitus can be addressed with plantain in a tea, tincture or pill.

Alternatives for internal application: black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*), goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*)

Water Retention/Bloating

- Elder (flower)
- Parsley
- Yarrow

Water retention and bloating can occur as a result of stress on the kidneys or as a fluctuation in hormones. Water weight gain typically occurs in women when their estrogen levels get too high during the monthly ebb and flow of the menstrual cycle. The body simply becomes less efficient at moving water out of the cells and into the bloodstream. This is more than a cosmetic issue because the pressure from all this water can result in high blood pressure and increased toxicity in the body due to retained waste.

When I was in college, the popular drink before a formal dance was water with lemon. I was surprised to find later in life that lemons are indeed slimming because they support the kidneys' ability to move water out of our cells. Lemon is therefore a natural diuretic. Elder flower, parsley and yarrow are all appropriate herbal diuretics that you can use as tea, tincture or capsule to reduce water retention. Elder flower tea is best served warm for this application. Keep a diuretic tea handy and drink at least a cup each day, especially if this is a chronic issue. Continual water retention suggests a weakness in the kidneys that needs to be toned and supported.

Common wisdom states that you need to reduce sodium to reduce bloating. The truth is that if you are eating natural sea salt, there is no reason to be excessive, but neither is there any reason to reduce your intake. Natural sea salt is important to help maintain the body's proper water balance and natural electrolytes. Instead, it is important when struggling with water retention and bloating to ensure that your protein intake is sufficient, well raised and from clean sources. And finally, get moving! Exercise is one of the best ways to help the kidneys pull water out of the body.

Alternatives for internal application: birch (*Betula* spp.), buchu (*Agathosma betulina*), celery seed (*Apium graveolens*), cornsilk (*Zea mays*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), gravelroot (*Eupatorium purpureum*), horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), juniper (berry) (*Juniperus communis*), uva ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*)

ENDOCRINE/REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

The endocrine and reproductive systems are the keepers of the vast majority of hormones that circulate in the human body. These hormones regulate just about everything that makes our bodies run. It is critical that we keep these systems running smoothly if we want to enjoy not just adequate health but vitality. Beyond the basic recommendations for a daily diet, it is important to emphasize good quality protein, calcium and magnesium, and vitamins A, C and E. The organs and glands that make up these systems are particularly sensitive to our emotions, so lifestyle is a large factor in any effort to maintain or preserve their health.

At one time, for me the word hormone was associated with reproductive expression and little else. When I was affected by a hormonal imbalance I quickly discovered that at the core of our daily function, we are supported by many other hormones; it would take another book entirely to describe all of their interplay. Hormones run most of our key organ functions, and it is very easy to get them out of kilter. We affect these hormones with the food we eat, the lifestyle we choose, the medications we take and even our thoughts and emotions.

Adrenal Stress/Exhaustion

- Hops
- Lemon Balm
- Licorice
- Parsley
- Sage

The adrenal glands are part of the endocrine system and sit on top of the kidneys just under the back of our ribcage. They are primarily organs of homeostasis. It is their task to keep our body balanced no matter what external or internal stimulus might come our way. To do this, they influence the intricate hormonal dance that goes on at all times.

The adrenal glands are responsible for keeping the body running smoothly regardless of the stimulus. We tend to assume they are merely

organs of “fight or flight,” and this is partly true. Fight or flight is part of a bigger picture. Anything that causes our body to adjust its inner balance will be governed by the adrenal glands.

T-Rex has entered the village? The adrenals signal the digestion (and any other non-essential functions like reproduction) to stop, the blood vessels to constrict, the heart to pump faster, the mind to focus on an escape route and the waters of the body to be reabsorbed into the cells for use as our legs pull all our energy for running away. T-Rex is the type of emergency situation we all expect to be associated with the adrenals. It is an obvious situation to involve increased adrenaline. What about something simpler? What about the anger you feel in a traffic jam? Yep, the adrenals feel that anger and are charged to do something with it. Blood vessels are constricted, the heart pumps faster and hundreds of other biological changes are made. Unfortunately, there is no action. We are sitting in traffic not escaping or fighting. This is a great example of the many times in today’s society we “cry wolf” to our adrenals. We get them ready for action, ask them to circulate their hormones of control and then do nothing more. These frequent and frustrated alerts tire our various body systems and can begin to cause other syndromes: imbalances in blood sugar, blood pressure issues and trouble focusing to name a few. The trouble with crying wolf too often is that eventually no one responds. The adrenal glands become exhausted and finally begin to fail; they have spent too much time fighting for balance within a body that is forever yelling for help.

As the adrenals are tied to so many of our body systems, signs of imbalance can show up as seemingly unrelated symptoms. When you exhibit multiple body system dysfunctions, it is important to consider that the adrenals may be at the bottom of them. You may have problems with sleep, frequent urination, digestive disturbances, blood sugar imbalances, depression or anxiety, thyroid imbalance, trouble focusing or remembering, high blood pressure, reproductive imbalance or dysfunction, respiratory imbalance and much, much more.

Correcting a problem with the adrenals is slow work, but can be done. Lifestyle is one of the most important things to address. Any kind of stress on the body will stimulate the adrenals. It is important to find a way to manage feelings of anxiety, anger and overwhelm. This often requires some work on the nervous system. That is the reason to use herbs such as lemon

balm and hops. They are important to calm down the nervous system. They can be used internally in tea, tincture or pill of course, but they might also work very nicely for a full or foot bath as a daily routine. Stimulants must be strictly avoided while you work to heal the adrenal glands. A quick speedup of the body's metabolism demands our adrenals to preserve internal balance both during the speedup and during the letdown. This means no coffee, chocolate, refined sugar and though it is actually a depressant, alcohol.

Exercise should include non-competitive options. Slow movement activities such as yoga, tai chi, walking or swimming are great examples. There are some wonderful adrenal tonics that can be added into the daily routine, and they include licorice, which is pretty much a specific, as well as parsley. Sage is a special adrenal tonic for women. It is a helpful support to these glands as they begin to take on the burden of being the body's sole estrogen producer in menopause.

Alternatives for internal application: borage (*Borago officinalis*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), linden (*Tilia* × *europaea*), milky oats (*Avena sativa*), passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), St. John's wort, valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

Cramps

- Cayenne
- Comfrey
- Ginger
- Hops
- Lobelia

Cramping is not specific to women and the menstrual cycle. Anything that we do for menstrual cramps can relieve nighttime leg cramps or any other random muscular cramp. The point of any treatment while cramping is occurring is always to address pain while applying an antispasmodic.

There are a lot of reasons why our muscles cramp up. This type of pain can be a result of overwork, lack of hydration or a lack of nutrition.

Growing up I remember the common wisdom was to eat a banana if you had a cramp. Actually, it is more likely that you are low in calcium and/or magnesium if you are prone to cramping. It would be more helpful to improve your electrolyte balance with something high in these minerals, such as a good bone broth, instead.

Herbal solutions to cramping can be found for both internal as well as external applications. A lobelia tincture can be helpful as an emergency muscle relaxant. Comfrey, ginger, hops and cayenne can all be used topically as a poultice, compress, liniment, bath or salve to relieve cramping.

If you are a woman and are finding that you suffer from uterine cramps each month, it is important to add a seaweed of your choice or dark green leafy vegetables during the week before your cycle and at least three days into it. This will help to support the calcium levels in your body and prevent the crash that precipitates cramping. You should also seek a trained abdominal massage practitioner to ensure that your reproductive organs are correctly positioned. Many times cramping can occur because of a tipped uterus.

Alternatives for internal application: black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*), crampbark (*Viburnum trilobum*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*)

High Blood Sugar

- Garlic
- Ginger
- Licorice
- Parsley
- Yarrow

My family has struggled with blood sugar issues, mainly of the type II variety. There are two types of diabetes, type I and type II. Type I is also called juvenile diabetes; it often develops early on and is managed throughout a lifetime. Type I is characterized by an autoimmune dysfunction focused on the cells in the pancreas that would normally make

insulin. This type of diabetes must be managed under a doctor's care, though some of the suggestions in this section may be helpful to augment this care with natural remedies.

Type II diabetes typically develops later in life after we've had a chance to abuse our body a bit. This type develops due to a continued high level of blood sugar as a result of insulin resistance. Most cases of diabetes are type II. This disease is often related to lifestyle and involves activity level, diet, stress level, hormonal balance, allopathic medications and general toxicity of the body.

Complications of diabetes can include wounds that won't heal, eye disorders, circulatory and heart problems, higher risk of infections and problems with the major organs of the body.

Symptoms include excessive thirst, increased urination, weight gain (especially in the belly), blurred vision, elevated cholesterol and/or triglycerides, extreme fatigue, cravings for carbs and then an energy crash afterward, numbness in the extremities and sensitivity to cold.

One of the first things to look at in diabetes is the health of the digestive system. If the body has ceased to digest food properly, there are nutrient deficiencies and hormonal imbalances that can affect our blood glucose levels. The next place I think we must look is the adrenal glands. These glands help to control the way we metabolize glucose, and when they are overloaded that system goes awry.

My mother developed type II diabetes in her early 50s. She is typical of many other women in that her difficulty in processing sugar came on after being prescribed medication for cholesterol. I suspect that this medication was not necessary and caused a strain on her liver that increased inflammation in her body and brought on her diabetes. There seems to be a triangle of influence in the development of blood sugar issues. The path to getting back on track addresses the overall health of the digestion and the liver and adrenals specifically.

The collection of fat around the middle of our bodies is a signal of adrenal gland stress and also of an inability to process sugar. Exercise is often helpful, but for long-term health needs to be low impact and not competitive. Walking, yoga, biking or swimming can be good options for daily movement. It is well known that moving favorably impacts blood sugar issues greatly.

Beyond medications to control blood glucose levels, the Western medical recommendation has long been a low-fat, high carbohydrate diet focused on lean meat. This diet has perpetuated a blood sugar problem in many. Low-fat and sugar-free are code words for chemical substitution. Diabetes is a disease of high inflammation, and processed foods can be inflammatory. Instead, someone who wishes to reduce their blood sugar levels and increase the sensitivity of their cells to insulin needs to eat a much different diet. The focus must be on a higher proportion of protein and lower carbohydrate intake. Unfortunately, few know that the body views most any carbohydrate as a sugar. Most diabetics think that because they've cut back on sweets they're fine. Meanwhile their diet consists of pasta, bread and white potatoes. All carbohydrates must be taken into consideration each day and kept to a minimum. The protein must be high quality and accompanied by high quality, appropriate fats and significant amounts of fiber in the form of a variety of vegetables.

Many diets recommend that we either reduce our intake of meat or eliminate it altogether. This is somewhat on point, but isn't a good idea long-term. In the short term, it can be a practical part of treatment to eat only foods that are easier to digest. Bone broths, steamed vegetables, lean meats and proper fats combined with a dose of probiotic food at each meal are starting points. This is so important because the main goal of a natural diabetes therapy must be to get the digestion fired up. This does not mean that properly raised meat is a problem. It is simply that meat is harder to digest and should be brought back into the diet when the digestive system is ready for it again. Processed and packaged foods should be ditched completely, along with hydrogenated oils, refined sugars and flours. These foods should never return to the diet.

Organ meats have been dropped from our everyday fare, and that is a shame. Especially in the case of diabetes, there are trace nutrients in these foods that are critical for health. You may supplement for vitamins E, C and the B complex as well as chromium, magnesium and CoQ10 or you may add them back in with food. Liver and heart once a week can easily cover some of these requirements — and they can both be ground into your burger meat by your local butcher so your family doesn't know. Spirulina is another good food supplement to add here, along with nuts for their vitamin

E. Regular intake of parsley will boost Vitamin C. It is also a good idea to add a daily cod liver oil supplement.

Our diets need to bring back the bitter, especially when it comes to blood sugar regulation. Most of our vegetables have been selectively bred over the years to the point that we mainly get sugar, even from them. Thus the vegetable seed sales description on a variety of cucumber will emphasize that the peel doesn't get bitter. This is the human taste preference; bitter appreciation must be cultivated. Sadly, we really need bitterness for digestion to get back on track. As we don't typically find it in foods, creating your own digestive bitters and using them before each meal is crucial.

Garlic, yarrow and licorice all contain phytochemicals that have been shown to assist with blood sugar maintenance, each in their own way. Ginger is best fresh or freshly tinctured. As you begin to work on a healing diet, it can be helpful to include these herbs in teas, tinctures or capsules along the way.

Always work with your primary care physician as you add supplements intended to alter the way your body manages blood sugar levels. You will want to test often and keep a food journal to show any correlations in dropping levels. There are, of course, dangers in low blood sugar levels as well. If you are taking medication to artificially lower levels and you are also changing diet and supplements, it is important you don't become too successful. Medication must be altered with the knowledge and partnership of your physician.

Alternatives for internal application: American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), bitter melon (*Momordica charantia*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum cassia*), fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), guggul gum (*Commiphora mukul*), gymnema (*Gymnema sylvestre*), prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia phaeacantha*)

Thyroid Imbalances

- Parsley

The thyroid gland sits at the front of our throat, incidentally where we feel pressure when we hold in our emotions. There is a connection between our

emotional thought life and our endocrine system that is worth exploring if someone you know struggles with an imbalance here.

The thyroid is part of the endocrine system that has a hand in our metabolism. It is one of the body's great regulators, helping us to manage our energy. It works as a team with the adrenals to help the liver convert estradiol and estrone into estriol. When this job is not managed it can lead to unfortunate symptoms in both men and women which can in turn lead to illnesses associated with high inflammation. Parsley can be used as an overall tonic for the thyroid gland. In women, an imbalanced thyroid can lead to fluctuations in the amount of bleeding each month as well as many of the other well-known symptoms classified as PMS.

There are two main imbalances of the thyroid gland in addition to general inflammation and the development of nodules. These imbalances are hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.

Hypothyroidism

- Cayenne
- Chickweed
- Ginger
- Licorice

Hypothyroidism is a condition where the thyroid is underactive. The poorly performing thyroid can cause unexplained weight gain, lethargy, hair loss, poor appetite, constant feelings of being cold and an inability to withstand cold temperatures. It is believed that only in developing countries is this problem caused by too little iodine. In the Western world our food producers added iodine to salt long ago. Unfortunately, this salt is a chemical soup, and the iodine is synthetic. The ensuing toxicity from eating this salt can cause the body to have to work much harder to metabolize the minerals. As the thyroid is intimately tied to the proper workings of our metabolism, it is no mystery that table salt can contribute to the problem here. Unfortunately, when we hear about the dangers of salt they seem to lump both table and natural salt together. The first is a danger, and the second is necessary for daily health. It is important to keep the salt shaker on the table, but fill it with sea salt or Himalayan salt only.

Natural sources of iodine should be added to the diet in small amounts each day to support the thyroid. Some good examples are seaweeds and algae, which can be added to seasoning salt blends for easy acceptance in any household. Iodine is important to build the digestion, in particular the gut portion of the immune system, when the thyroid is functioning poorly. Adding living probiotic food at each meal is crucial in dealing with an underactive thyroid, as is the addition of chickweed. This unassuming weed is an expert at building health in the endocrine system and helping with assimilation of nutrients. By adding chickweed to a program that adds proper salt and natural iodine sources, you can easily begin to bring back that which is missing. Licorice is valuable for overall endocrine health and is therefore appropriate to consider in an internal formulation here. Avoid eating too many raw vegetables and those in the broccoli family in particular. They are known to slow down the thyroid.

Ginger and cayenne should be added to give the metabolism a boost. Simply including them in food and drink as often as desired is enough. Foods that are traditionally high in selenium are important to eat when the thyroid is underactive. These foods are sunflower seeds, seafood and Brazil nuts. Be sure to source these foods from high-quality sources. Soil quality matters. Selenium is notoriously deficient in our soils and will only be found in foods growing on those soils that have specifically been rebuilt.

Alternatives for internal application: black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), kelp

Hyperthyroidism

- Lemon Balm
- Mullein

Hyperthyroidism is a condition where the thyroid is overactive. The symptoms tend to look like the results of a metabolism on hyperdrive. There is often thinning of the skin and hair, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, unexplained weight loss, nervousness, shakiness, heartbeat racing or irregularities and a tendency to feel hot and sweaty a good deal of the time. Some people who suffer with an overactive thyroid gland can have an allergy to iodine, though in both hyper- and hypothyroidism there is evidence that a deficiency in this nutrient may be at the bottom of the

problem. Nevertheless, those with hyperthyroidism must be very careful about eating foods, especially seaweeds and algae, that contain iodine. They must absolutely remove iodized salt from their diet and either limit their salt intake or use small amounts of natural or sea salt.

Mullein and lemon balm are classic aids to help in regulating the overactive thyroid when used in teas, tinctures or capsules. They usually produce relatively quick results. It is important also to increase the intake of living probiotic foods. There is some evidence that the immune system needs to be shored up in the case of hyperthyroidism, and most often it is that part of the immune system that is housed in the gut that is weakened. Because this illness causes a strain on the cardiovascular system, it would also be a good idea to follow the suggestions for heart palpitations and irregularities earlier in this part of the book.

Alternatives for internal application: cabbage, motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

Yeast Infection

- Calendula
- Elder
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Sage
- Wild Bergamot

The healthy vagina is slightly acidic. This keeps all the microorganisms living in community in balance. Yeast infections can occur in both men and women and then get passed back and forth. It is always best to treat both partners. When pH balance is thrown off, it allows an overgrowth of a potentially problematic organism such as candida or monilia.

Symptoms of a yeast infection can include itching and irritation. There is usually a bad-smelling discharge that can be white or greenish in color and cheese-like in texture. There is inflammation, redness and swelling of external tissues. There can also, in some cases, be sores and blisters that mimic the appearance of herpes at first glance.

A yeast infection can be brought on by sex, stress, improper diet, weakened immune system from another illness, natural hormonal fluctuations, birth control pills, medication that alters any of the body's hormones, antibiotics and sulfa drugs.

Antibiotics are effective, but are non-specific. They kill off all the flora and leave an environment that is no longer populated with beneficial bacteria that can outcompete the bad. It can become easy for harmful organisms to grow out of balance on a regular basis. If antibiotics must be used, it is important to increase the use of probiotic foods until balance is restored.

The best course of action with a yeast infection involves dietary change, rest and the use of herbs. This approach, instead of a slash and burn antibiotic strategy, focuses on returning the vaginal environment to balanced health.

From a dietary standpoint, all of the recommendations for general health that I have made in *Heal Local* so far apply. This is a time to be very strict in avoiding the intake of alcohol, refined sugar and flour. Foods such as unsweetened cranberry juice, cranberries, lemons and grapefruit can be added to support the appropriate pH level in the vagina. The diet should be light and easy to digest. A focus on bone broths, properly prepared grain and steamed vegetables would be good.

The herbs listed above can be used in combination, in rotation or on their own to quell a yeast overgrowth. These herbs may be tinctured, encapsulated or used as a tea. Sage, garlic and calendula can also be used internally either as a suppository (in the case of garlic), vaginal steam or as a tea blend for vaginal douche. Be careful in using a douche, as this therapy has been known to cause imbalances in the vaginal flora all on its own. It is useful nonetheless in some cases and may be needed with a particularly tenacious infection.

Whenever one partner of any couple is infected with a yeast overgrowth, it is important to treat the other one. A male partner should follow the same dietary suggestions and can use the herbs suggested both internally as well as externally. Men can treat themselves by finding a container (James Green suggests a water glass) that is deep enough to submerge their penis.[21] This glass is filled with a tea of your choice of

herbs from the list. This is, in essence, an external douche and should be repeated every few days.

Alternatives for internal application: black walnut (hull) (*Juglans nigra*), goldenseal (root) (*Hydrastis canadensis*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*), pau d'arco (*Tabebuia impetiginosa*)

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT CANCER

This is the terror disease of our time. Due to its complexity, it is beyond the scope of this book. People have success every day managing their cancer at home with natural methods. Everyone chooses the way they walk this path; every choice must be respected, with each patient receiving the dignity they deserve. From a wholistic perspective, there is not one magic bullet to share. Treatment for cancer is personally tailored and must take into account diet, body system affected, overall constitution, tissue state, attitude and emotional and spiritual condition. Anyone who is looking for strategies for their particular cancer will need to assemble a good team of health consultants including MDs, herbalists, bodyworkers, spiritual counselors and more. You may find some helpful books to begin your research in the resource section of this book.

Afterword

IF I'VE INSPIRED YOU, and I hope I have, what is the next step? This is a revolution that must spread far and wide, but there is a limiting factor to the change that is needed. No matter how much we want our communities to be healthy, we cannot force those around us to take responsibility for themselves. No matter how clearly you see that robust daily health, created by the intake of whole food and whole plant supplementation, is our way forward this way of life must be found by others in their own time.

If you are just starting on this path yourself, take small steps. Start with local food that has been raised with sincerity and integrity. Replace a few of the over-the-counter preparations in your medicine chest with natural options. Make a plan for retaking the wheel of your life. Write down some of the questions you have had about your medications or your health challenges and take them to your next doctor's appointment. Find out if your doctor is a good partner in this change you'd like to make. If not, start looking for a new one.

RACHAEL BRUGGER

Which health path will you and your family take into the future?

If you're further along, be a leader. You can lead in the Heal Local movement by example. You can lead by standing firm in your decisions and not judging others for theirs. How we care for our health is, after all, an

entirely personal matter. If your family and friends sense that you are judging them based on their decisions to use Western medicine to treat their ailments, you have lost. Instead, let your community know that you can offer other options, but that you respect each person's choices regardless of what they decide. Passion is good until you find yourself emotionally involved in a controlling way in someone else's health decisions. We want our medical professionals to stand in this same maturity, to provide counsel, to argue their point passionately and then let us make our own decisions. There will be no converts to the Heal Local movement through name-calling or fearmongering.

When I started to make changes for myself, my husband and my dad were my greatest skeptics. While they were in my family, this did not mean I had any more control over them than I did my neighbor. I brought them delicious dishes that included healing foods. I gently suggested without judgment. When they eventually tried one of my ideas for a small health problem and successfully healed, they were hooked. My dad is now making small ripples of his own, suggesting simple changes among his group of friends. This is how it happens. All of these small ripples eventually begin to rock the boat of the larger society — and boy, do we need that boat rocked!

We are indeed at a watershed moment when it comes to health in the United States. We have defined ourselves based on slick promises of ease and convenience. We have lost our connection to traditional foodways and local medicine community knowledge and practice. Western medicine has promised us that we don't need to think about our own personal health care. We have been seduced by the instant gratification of symptom remediation; we have forgotten that truly balanced health is hard work and may require us to suffer the consequences of poor choices. We have become convinced that we must leave the knowing of our bodies to an external professional. We have outsourced our well-being.

Taking responsibility for ourselves starts at home, and it reaches out into our communities from there. We must demand the resources we need to heal locally. We must find ways to support local medicine communities that are personal to the region we live in and the people who live there, and we must value that local medicine enough to pay a living wage to those who are producing it for us.

If everyone who picks up this book takes even a small step toward sourcing their medicine locally and taking responsibility for basic health at home, imagine what a difference it would make!

A mighty flame followeth a tiny spark.

— Dante Alighieri

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Appendix A

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Glossary

Abortifacient — Capable of causing the termination of a pregnancy.

Adrenal agent — Pharmacological substances that affect the performance of the adrenal glands.

Allopathic — A system of medical practice that treats disease by the use of remedies which produce effects different from those produced by the disease under treatment.

Alterative — A substance that favorably improves the condition of the blood, restoring health and vitality. Alteratives often act by supporting the liver in cleansing the blood of impurities.

Anhidrotic — Capable of arresting excessive sweating, drying the water that is expelled from the body.

Antiasthmatic — Inhibiting the symptoms of asthma.

Antibacterial — Destroying or inhibiting the growth and reproduction of bacteria.

Anti-catarrhal — Destroying or inhibiting mucus buildup in a body system.

Antidepressive — Inhibiting or preventing the experience of depression.

Antifungal — Destroying or inhibiting the growth and reproduction of fungi.

Antihistamine — A substance used to counteract the effects of histamine in the body during an allergic response or cold.

Anti-inflammatory — Capable of reducing inflammation.

Anti-lithic — A substance capable of preventing the formation of stones in various organs of the body.

Antimicrobial — Capable of destroying or inhibiting the growth of various microorganisms.

Anti-pyretic — Having the ability to reduce fever.

Antirheumatic — Having the ability to prevent or relieve rheumatism.

Antiseptic — Capable of preventing infection by inhibiting or destroying organisms that would otherwise be responsible for infection.

Antispasmodic — Capable of preventing or relaxing muscle spasm.

Antitumor — Capable of destroying or inhibiting the growth of tumors.

Antiviral — Destroying or inhibiting the growth and reproduction of viruses.

Astringent — Having the ability to constrict the proteins in our cells, often helping to reduce discharge or tighten pores.

Cardiac tonic — A substance that is nutritive, supportive and capable of promoting the health of the heart.

Carminative — Having the ability to improve digestion, reduce gas and relieve intestinal cramping.

Catarrh — Inflammation of mucous membranes, particularly of the nose and throat, with free-flowing discharge.

Cathartic — Causing a dramatic and complete purging of the bowels.

Cholagogue — A substance that is capable of promoting the production and flow of bile.

Decoction — The process of making an herbal tea of bark, roots, nuts and non-aromatic seeds. Add the herbs to water in a small saucepot (two to three teaspoon herb per cup of water, three to four tablespoon herb per quart of water). Bring the mixture to a boil and reduce heat to a simmer. Simmer covered for 15–20 minutes.

Demulcent — Having the ability to smooth, coat and soothe internal mucous membranes.

Diaphoretic — A substance that can be used to reduce fever by inducing sweating.

Diuretic — A substance that increases the flow of urine and helps to flush toxins from the body through the kidneys.

Electuary — An old way of mixing medicine in which a medicinal substance is mixed with a form of sugar and often a fruit compote for greater ease of ingestion.

Emetic — A substance that causes vomiting.

Emmenagogue — A substance that is helpful in bringing on a menstrual cycle. If a cycle is delayed during preconception because of fertility drugs, or during lactation because of fluctuating hormone levels, an emmenagogue, taken in steady chronic dosage, tends to bring bleeding within days.

Emollient — Having the ability to smooth, coat and soothe external skin.

Expectorant — A substance that is helpful in expelling mucus from the chest.

Febrifuge — A substance that helps to reduce a fever, usually by encouraging sweating.

Galactagogue — A substance that encourages lactation.

GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) — Any plant or animal that has been altered on the genetic level in a laboratory or genetics facility. Not to be confused with a hybrid, which can occur in nature on its own or under the guidance of a human. GMOs are created by a combining of genetic material that would not otherwise occur in nature, such as a coming together of human and pig DNA or chemical herbicides and corn DNA.

Healing Crisis — An acute crisis of symptoms that occurs as we begin to detoxify the body. Much long-term toxicity is deeply buried and entrenched, and the body has often adjusted to its presence in some ways. As the body begins to heal, the cells holding this toxicity either die off or

cast off their toxic contents. This creates congestion and irritation in the eliminatory organs as everything is heading to the exits all at one time. Many symptoms that are felt at this time are similar or even worse than the illnesses and imbalances that created the toxicity in the first place. Some experience rashes or headaches; if the original imbalance was part of menstrual cycle irregularities, the healing crisis may involve intense cramping or heavier than normal bleeding. Healing crises can also involve emotional imbalances.

Hypnotic — A substance that can bring about sleep.

Hypotensive — A substance that is capable of reducing blood pressure.

Infusion — An herbal tea made from leaves, berries, aromatic seeds and/or flowers. A typical infusion is made by adding two to three teaspoons of herb per cup of water or three to four tablespoons of herb per quart of water and steeping it covered for 10–20 minutes.

Laxative — A substance that when used internally aids the bowels in elimination of waste.

Mastitis — Inflammation of the breast or milk ducts.

Mucilaginous — Being gelatinous, sticky or viscid.

Pectoral — A class of herbs with a specific affinity for treating disorders of the chest or respiratory system.

Poultice — A soft mass such as a herb mixture applied to an affected area. Be sure to change the herbs often if you are drawing out an infection.

Purgative — See Cathartic.

Rubefacient — A substance that when applied externally stimulates the movement of toxicity from deep within tissues by creating an irritating effect.

Sedative — A substance that calms the nervous system.

Specific — An herb that is specifically indicated for an ailment; the one everyone uses that is perfect for the symptoms.

Stimulant — A substance that excites the nervous system as well as the metabolism and often the digestion.

Styptic — A substance that helps to induce clotting or stop the flow of blood.

Thrush — An overgrowth of yeast found in the mouth characterized by a white tongue or patches of white inside the cheeks.

Tincture — A plant extract made by soaking herbs in a liquid (such as water, alcohol, vinegar or glycerine) for a specified length of time, then straining and discarding the plant material. The remaining liquid is used therapeutically.

Tonic — A substance that is nutritive and capable of building health in a gentle steady manner. They are often very safe in nature and can be used in the body over long periods of time with generally a very low risk of contraindications.

Vermifuge — A substance that is helpful in the expulsion of intestinal worms.

Vulnerary — A class of herbs that is capable of healing tissues.

Appendix A: United Plant Savers

A COUPLE OF THE HERBS I chose for the apothecary in this book are at risk of being overharvested or losing their habitat. They are designated as either “At-Risk” or “To-Watch.” “At-Risk” herbs are most at risk of disappearing and “To-Watch” designees have declining populations. The designations come from an organization that is very near and dear to my heart, United Plant Savers.

Rosemary Gladstar started United Plant Savers (UpS)[1] because she and her colleagues in the world of herbalism saw a decline in the wild population of some of our most beloved native herbs. At the time, these plants had been overused in the wild because it was believed that they were more powerful than cultivated herbs. We have since learned that it is possible to raise many of these plants in a sustainable way while working to repopulate our wild areas. We have also learned that cultivated herbs are just as powerful as their wild counterparts.

UNITED PLANT SAVERS

At one time it was believed that there was more than enough ginseng and goldenseal to go around. These plants are now in grave danger of disappearing from the planet. It is my intention to spread the word that whole plant medicine is superior to the result of chemical isolates taken or made in a lab. There is a responsibility that comes with teaching this lesson. If everyone began to use dandelion that they found in their yards with no plan as to how they would reseed, next year it wouldn't take long before dandelion might be an "At-Risk" plant in all those yards. It's hard to imagine that a plant we consider a weed might ever be in endangered, but that is precisely the type of hubris we must guard against. Nothing in our natural world is safe if we all begin to use it in a non-sustainable way. We must protect the herbs that are endangered today, and we must prevent other medicinals from taking their place tomorrow.

We can work in partnership with our natural medicine resources in the following ways:

- Buy from *only* sustainable suppliers. If you know that an herb is in danger from being overharvested in the wild, be sure that you are not buying from someone who is selling plants they have clearcut from a forest.
- Plant as many of the endangered herbs on your property as you can. If you are constantly using a store-bought echinacea tincture, deepen your relationship with the medicine by planting it in a sunny spot in your backyard. You may not harvest from this particular plant, but you have just contributed to its ability to have more habitat.
- If you harvest a threatened species yourself, be sure to replant, or take only enough so you don't threaten the local population. After all, if you wish to use a plant year after year, the best way to make sure it's available to you and your loved ones is to keep it growing successfully in its native environment. It's less work for you and healthier for the plant and the planet!
- Use more abundant alternative herbs wherever possible.
- Join UpS. Their organization works to establish botanical sanctuaries, move plants that are in the way of development, evaluate plant population numbers, conduct research and much, much more.

Appendix B: Comfrey: A Study in Herbal Safety

THE WEBSITE OF COMFREY CENTRAL is the best source of research information on comfrey, an herb used in organic gardening and as an herbal medicine.[1] I include it here because as we get further into the idea of returning to natural medicines, we will continue to see plants like comfrey vilified by the Western medical establishment and drug companies. At times, caution may be warranted, but let comfrey be an example of how to make a good decision when you see herbs in the news. When you read about a piece of research, always ask the following:

- Who funded the research, and what was their motivation?
- What are the methods of the research?
- What are the applications to human use? Was this a trial on humans or animals?
- What are your own personal decisions after reading the research, and what individual health concerns of yours may be factored in to your decision to use or not use it?

Comfrey is one example of a medicinal herb with many great qualities; it has been maligned in the general media.

•What is the historical information on the herb? Have there been any written indications of the same issue in the past?

In the case of comfrey, here is what I have learned. Comfrey is a common name for plants in the genus *Symphytum.* Years ago, a study claimed to demonstrate that the plant had harmful effects,[2] and as a result the herb has been classified as a poison in some countries. There are some varieties of comfrey, including *S. officinale*, that contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs). It is now probable that the most readily available *Symphytum* variety here in the United States is *S.* × *uplandica*, which does not.

At any rate, let's assume we are really getting *S. officinale* whenever we purchase dried comfrey for use. The 1979 study was done on 21-week-old rats, which do not have the same reaction to PAs as humans do. The rats were injected with a high dose of one of the isolated PAs (symphytine) rather than a dilution of the whole plant. When you isolate a compound within a plant you do not get the thousands of other chemicals that often act as a buffer for that compound. At any rate, humans don't inject comfrey; we eat it. When it is injected, the effect of the compound is concentrated. A small number of the rats in the study subsequently developed liver cancer. Were we to duplicate in our daily diet the same level of PA consumption used in the study, we would need to consume anywhere between three quarters of a pound and 114 pounds a day for at least 21 weeks. Given that the average amount in a therapeutic dose of comfrey is a quarter of an ounce or less, getting cancer from ingesting comfrey is possible but only after an unreasonable level of ingestion. Finally, there is no information in the historic data of problems with the use of comfrey, and there are no cases of veno-occlusive disease of the liver that can be definitively traced to comfrey ingestion.

Many people continue to use comfrey internally without concern. In all such cases, you must balance newer scientific findings on each herb with your own internal voice. If you feel that a "banned" herb is fine for you, be sure to let your health care team know of your decision so that they can offer you their perspectives and help you avoid any future negative interactions or overuse.

Appendix C: Herbal Resources

Further Learning

- Mockingbird Meadows Eclectic Herbal Institute. mockingbirdmeadows.com/mockingbird-meadows-eclectic-herbal-institute/
- Florida School of Holistic Living. holisticlivingschool.org
- Sage Mountain Retreat Center and Botanical Sanctuary. sagemountain.com
- Heartstone Center for Earth Essentials. heart-stone.com
- Vermont Center for Integrative Herbalism. Vtherbcenter.org

Dried Herb Resources

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you never buy an herb strictly on the basis of its common name. If any retailer or herbal source does not list both the common name and a Latin name on their packaging, you should avoid purchasing from them! Most plants may have dozens of different common names that may have different cultural or historic derivations. Each herb, however, will have only one scientific or Latin name. Always be sure you are getting exactly what you want.

- Mountain Rose Herbs. mountainroseherbs.com
- Zack Woods Herb Farm. zackwoodsherbs.com
- (Canada) Richter's Herbs. richters.com
- Starwest Botanicals. starwest-botanicals.com
- Organic India. organicindia.com

Medicine-making How-to Videos

- Mockingbird Meadows YouTube Channel. youtube.com/channel/UCRU2QUF1xPrWQqq8s5b7Mqg

Supplies

- Heal Local Medicine Chest Starter Kit — Mockingbird Meadows (mockingbirdmeadows.com/store/heal-local-medicine-chest-starter-kit)
- Compoult Pad — Mockingbird Meadows (mockingbirdmeadows.com/store/compoult-pad)
- Standard Medicine Cabinet Label Templates (FREE!) — Mockingbird Meadows (mockingbirdmeadows.com/store/standard-medicine-cabinet-labels)
- Fermented Cod Liver Oil — Green Pastures (greenpasture.org/public/Products/CodLiverOil/index.cfm)
- Capsule machine — Mountain Rose Herbs (mountainroseherbs.com/catalog/home-goods/kitchen)
- Bottles, containers — Specialty Bottle (specialtybottle.com), SKS (sks-bottle.com)
- Bags — Uline (uline.com)
- Biodynamic Flower Essences — Harmony Farm (harmonyfarmonline.com)
- Miscellaneous — Frontier Co-op (frontiercoop.com)
- Jackass Bitters (*Neurolaena lobata*) — Rainforest Remedies (arvigotherapy.com/rainforest/products3?tid=24)
- Abdominal Massage Therapist Contact Information — Rainforest Remedies, Home Practitioners (arvigotherapy.com/practitioners)

Plant Nurseries/Seed Suppliers

As you begin to plant your own medicinals, it is important to buy from a reputable nursery. Ask questions. Are they raising their own? If they are buying wildcrafted roots and seeds, are they buying from someone who is managing the habitat in a sustainable way?

- Scioto Gardens. sciotogardens.com/
- Companion Plants Herb Nursery. companionplants.com/

•Horizon Herbs. horizonherbs.com
•Seed Savers Exchange. Seedsavers.org
•Johnny's Selected Seeds. Johnnyseeds.com
•High Mowing Organic Seeds. Highmowingseeds.com

Farming/Gardening Associations

•Biodynamic Association. biodynamics.com
•OEFFA (Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association). oeffa.org
•NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association). Nofa.org

Herbal Associations

•United Plant Savers. unitedplantsavers.org
•Herb Society of America. herbsociety.org/about/hsa-history.html
•American Botanical Council. abc.herbalgram.org/site/PageServer
•American Herbalists Guild. americanherbalistsguild.com
•Herb Research Foundation. herbs.org/herbnews/

Further Reading

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USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

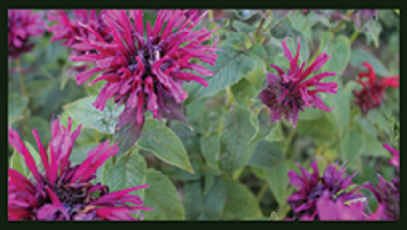
Get to know your hardiness zone. This map can help you make better decisions in your plant investments. Be aware that some plants will act as annuals in your area of the country; you will have to replant them each year or make plans for bringing them indoors. It is much less maintenance to buy plants that are typically hardy where you live and will last through the winter without your intercession.

This map changes from time to time so it is important to go to the source rather than to rely on an old printout: USDA Agricultural Research Service. *USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.* planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/

Botanical-Based Education • Native Plant Conservation • Sustainable Community Health

MOCKINGBIRD MEADOWS ECLECTIC HERBAL INSTITUTE

"Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine your food." -Hippocrates



At Mockingbird Meadows, our farm has long been focused on connecting customers and students to their own inner wisdom, to their surrounding comunity, to their families and to the earth.

We believe in a botanical-based education that embraces folkloric tradition with a contemporary knowledge of body systems, phyto-chemical compounds and current research. Above all, we believe in empowering the individual to take control of health decisions.

We are commited to providing education that meets our community where they are through all levels of holistic body care education.

- Herbal Health Workshops
- *Ask the Herbalist* Mobile Clinics
- Botanical Home Health Intro Course
- Botanical Health Apprenticeships
  - Foundations in Botanical Health (Year 1)
  - Advanced Botanical Health (Year 2)
  - Applied Botanical Health (Year 3)

VISIT THE INSTITUTE AND FARM AT:
WWW.MOCKINGBIRDMEADOWS.COM

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Our farm mission is to empower you with the fundamentals to become more *health sufficient*. We strive to reconnect you with traditional herbal knowledge and inspire in you the self-confidence needed to use herbs in your daily life.

Our farm education, publications and handmade herbal products are designed to help you maintain daily health using simple responsible solutions that are as close as your own garden, backyard or local wild spaces.

Honey & Herbs with Healing Intent

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- Makers of the nation's premier line of herbal honey spreads and other healthful products
- Chemical-free farm using biodynamic principles
- Mother Earth News 2013 National *Homesteaders of the Year*
- Founder of the BEESfirst cooperative for sustainable bekeeping
- United Plant Savers (UpS) Botanical Sanctuary and registered Monarch Sanctuary

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